WIND OF DESTINY

BY

SARA LINDSAY COLEMAN

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BY
SARA LINDSAY COLEMAN

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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1916

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FOREWORD

THE letters in this story are real letters. I know this because they were written to me by the man the world knows as O. Henry, author, and only as the author. Not half a dozen people knew the real Sydney Porter, and the man was greater than the author.

There are other letters which are mine own, and no other eyes shall see them. But the letters in this book were not written to me as a woman, but rather to the little girl of his memory who lived next door to him in the street of Yesterday.

The background for the letters is pure fiction. Maybe I have let more of myself creep into this tale than I had planned. If this be true, the reason is that my whole thought centred upon revealing Sydney Porter to the lovers of O. HENRY.

SARA LINDSAY COLEMAN.

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August 5th.
Saturday Morning.

I think from the day Dicky left us I have been waiting with bated breath for this letter. Ghost of our great, great, great-grandfather who lies in the old cemetery at Lexington, Virginia! Dicky has been answering a "Personal" in the New York *Herald.*

"Of course you won't understand, Caroline," she writes me. "There never was a day in your life when you would have understood. Books are people to you. You live placidly in that dull little mountain town, and when your time comes you'll die there placidly. Had you been Eve the angel with the flaming sword would never have had the unpleasant duty of driving you out. You to tempt a man! You're like that coldly beautiful statue Pygmalion fashioned. She waked to life, but you never will. I wonder why I tell you, Caroline. The probationers in this hospital—probably in all big city hospitals—are made to feel like the dirt under foot —if there was under foot any good honest earth-dirt. Every time her betters pass her she's got to paste herself against the wall, and all the inmates of the hospital

are her betters. There are some nice young doctors—but it is against discipline for her to speak to them. If she does the older nurses punish her with extra work. Last night, after a hard day, I walked on the Avenue—we are just a block away—and one of the beautiful doors opened just like enchantment, thrown back by a liveried servant. An old, old man came out. Perhaps it would have been different if youth and beauty had floated out. All that was his seemed so wasted. It was just the youth in me, I suppose, that was so fierce at life and its injustices. The lights down the Avenue beckoned and beckoned. I wanted to follow them. The distance was swallowing the old man in his car. Just for once in my life I wanted a taste of the city at night; I wanted to forget the groans of the sick and dying. You've never been a prune, and a potato, and a slice of bread. Try it, Caroline. I, who used to be Henrietta Dickenson, am now one thousand four hundred prunes. I am one thousand and ninety-five potatoes. I spare you the slices of bread. If you think I exaggerate make the count yourself. Prunes four times a week—five of them to a saucer. Potatoes each meal—meals three per day. Potatoes, prunes, and bread—plain, common food—maybe that's why I have done such a common thing.

"I turned off the Avenue. At a news stand I picked up the *Herald.* 'You don't want that. You want an

evening paper,' the boy said. Fate or the boy, I know not which, I took the *Herald*. The 'ad' I answered says the man is lonely; that he wants an attractive woman friend. The 'ad' was signed Telemachus. His letter fairly scintillated. I answered. He wrote again. Now he asks for a meeting. But the letter is oh, so chivalrous, so witty, so wonderful, Caroline. And there's a reticence, an impersonal note in it that piques a woman's fancy, stirs her imagination——

"I am leaving the hospital now. It is dusk—the time to meet the hero of one's adventure. The place of meeting is not far away. It is only a few blocks down Madison from the hospital. I have stolen out in a gypsy dress that I wore at the hospital dance. I have thrown a long dark cloak about me. In the twilight I shall escape—not be snatched up and sent to Bellevue. Don't worry, Caroline."

Don't worry! Since the day Dicky became our child (mother's sister's only child, a little wailing thing three days old and orphaned of her own mother) I have worried. Now my heart clutches with fear as it clutched the day, now a year past, when Dicky threw into our quiet midst the bomb of her determination to go away from us. Nineteen-year-old Dicky alone in the great city of New York. Our guarded and treasured lambkin thrown into the mouths of wolves.

A trained nurse! Under discipline! Dicky, the free, gypsy child of our hearts.

We, poor dear old mammy and I, register Dicky's emotions as faithfully as a trusted thermometer. That Dicky should have to rise with the sun, and, having risen, have to put her own room in order. That Dicky must be silent in the presence of her superiors. It sounds like the court of King James, anyway, and not free America—not that the court of any king would awe Dicky.

Once, before we came to live in the mountains, when Dicky was six, we paid a visit to grandmother. Dicky left a saucer of cottage cheese untasted at her plate. Next morning at breakfast it was there, at dinner, at tea. I saw when we went in to tea that the child's endurance of the saucer of cheese had been reached, and my coward teeth chattered in terror—grandmother had attempted to discipline the child before—the result being that for three interminable days Dicky had appeared at meals, brought down in the arms of grandmother's old coloured butler, robbed of her clothes and dressed in a royal defiance and a flannel nightgown. Dicky lifted the offending cheese daintily. She didn't look at me or at grandmother. She spoke to old Benjamin, and she was as perfectly poised and dignified as a little duchess. "Take it away, please," she said; "it's spoiled."

"Her mar's dead, an' yore mar's dead," mammy

said one morning as I hurried away to my school teaching; "if you an' Mr. John can't an' won't do nothin' to save the child from ruin, mammy will."

I came home the day of mammy's disciplining of Dicky to find the child digging up the lawn. If we do live in the heart of the Blue Ridge hills I cling to a remembered civilization—the front yard is the lawn. Gypsy curls blowing, gypsy eyes flashing, Dicky with each tiny upflung spade of dirt was shrieking (she couldn't have been more than seven), "Mr. Devil, Mr. Devil, can you hear? I'm going to keep on digging till I get close enough and you can hear. I want you to shovel mammy into your hot fire and burn her up."

I picked Dicky up that day and kissed the anger out of her flaming little face, and a few minutes later I heard her say in the voice that makes us wax in Dicky's hands, "I was just a little angry with you, Mammy, and I asked Mr. Devil to burn you up—but I'm not mad now, and I hope he won't."

Dicky went to New York. We knew that she would. That's why John and I, dear faithful old mammy, too, were so helpless, our hearts contracting in fear.

August 13th.
Sunday Night.

Scientists tell us that a change that is slow but complete takes place in the human body every seven years.

They are wrong about the process. It happens in the twinkling of an eye—like that change in the far-off judgment day of which the Bible tells. I know. This very day it happened to me. This Sabbath morning I waked a healthy, happy, normal spinster behind whom lay, except for this anxiety Dicky gives, almost thirty barren-of-emotion years.

Breakfast was not ready when I came down, so I rushed up the lane. If we lived more pretentiously it would be the drive. Beyond lay the white road that leads up to Marsville and trails round the mountain and out to a wider life.

The hills that neighbour with the blue ether were shaking night-caps of trailing mist from their heads. The mountain world breathed deep of August—proclaimed it exultantly in its vivid summer green as yet untouched by change; in its full-eared, ripening corn, massed on the hills like troops of soldiers. The insect shrills were August noises as were the lazy little chirps of the birds that have forgotten their joyous outpourings of spring. I loved it all—even the crow circling majestically about the distant hills so far away that his raucous cry came musically—and all of it contented me. Quite forgetting my approaching thirtieth birthday I threw a kiss to that mountain on the skyline that is so like a camel with a humpy back. There's always been a secret understanding between that mountain

and me, I suppose it is left over from my young girlhood, I was only eighteen the first time I saw Camel Back, that some day he would dump all his treasures into my lap—treasures from all the lands of the East. Yesterday I got another editor's check—Camel Back has always held me steady under my rejections, hence the salute. Down through the ages how the world would have laughed if the Egyptians had made their Sphinx a man—wise Egyptians. As I threw the kiss to my mountain the shadow of no man was on my heart, or had ever been, but I felt the thrill of life's infinite mystery and promise—felt it and called it an editor's check. At thirty a spinster woman may begin to run to fat, or she may show tendencies to shrivel, but I boldly declare, my knowledge dating back some dozen hours, that her heart is unwrinkled, ridiculously young, and scanning the horizon for Eastern treasures that the camels that hang in the skyline are to pour into her lap.

Back home, breakfast over, as John left the table he tossed a letter to me. It was Dicky's letter for which I have waited a whole week. It is in answer to the dozen I have sent out to her—like wireless messages of distress.

In the yard, out beyond the shadow of the big white pines, drying my hair—the women of Marsville have no beauty parlour in which to ruin it with dry air—lying

full length in the sun, my head pillowed on a cushion, pondering Dicky's letter, reading it over and over, I was jarred out of my reverie by a poke in the ribs and the mountaineer's, "Howdy." I failed to respond, was poked in the ribs a second time, sprang up indignantly and glared into the dirty, smiling landscape that is the face of old Sallie Singleton. "I thought I knowed that old back," her harsh voice said amiably. Old back, indeed. Unmindful of my lack of cordiality the floodgates opened and harsh verbal oceans submerged me. I tried to shut it out, but I could not. "Mis Golightly hadn't let the fire go out on her hearth for nigh forty year, but she went over the mountain to visit her daughter that had her first baby. In hearing of the train she took homesick and hiked it back. Savannah Lou was old-like, as I knowed, and, as I knowed, her beau died. He was full of debts as a dog is full of fleas, and the Lord knowed what he was doing when He took him. She had a picter left stid o' a man, and she was a sight happier with the picter then she'd a ben with the man. When he was courtin' they'd set and set, and talk and talk. He never took her nowhere—not even as far as her nose. She set store by the picter. She'd had a picter man put whiskers on it. She'd allus knowed whiskers'd become him, but he was stubborn and wouldn't grow 'em. She——"

But I had fled, running for my life—or was it to

save the life of old Sallie that I ran? In the twinkling of an eye the mysterious change had come. Sallie had poked in the back, the old back that she knowed, a contented spinster teacher. A horse whisked about in the shafts and made to go in a direction contrary to the one he was travelling might understand the bewilderment of the woman who fled from Sallie Singleton. I did not. We are strange creatures, blown upon by winds from the Invisible. We dwell forever in a little fenced-about cleared plot of ground that is our daily life and we are frightened if we but glimpse beyond the cleared land. I had looked over the fence, and I had seen a trackless region. In sudden panic I hated placid spinster teachers content to trudge their sober path through all the days allotted to them; in sudden terror age with its hideous potentialities of loneliness fell upon me. Age and old Sallie grown gray and dirtier but always with the Puck-like knowledge of the psychologic moment at which to torture me with the neighbourhood gossip. Age and John, dear, good John on one side of the fireplace winter nights roaring at me the advancement of his rheumatism and I on the other side roaring back the increasing feebleness of my digestion.

All day this spectre, this fear of the future, has held me by the throat. All day I have stumbled along in a maze of distorted thought—swept from all moorings of

common sense. Now I have come into the night, the big, silent, star-filled night to ask peace of it. Here under the giant pines that stand like sentinels to guard the peace of the old house I sit on the bench. How still and warm and sweet—a white, white August night, for the coming moon lights the sky. Above all nights I have loved these August nights—the clematis dropping from the upper porch airy and diaphanous as a bride's veil, and there in the border, running parallel with the low, long, rambling, gray, gray old house the white phlox in masses neighbouring with the August lilies. Looking at the lilies I catch my breath in pain. In their faint, sweet breathings they say to me, "We live but for a day. Take warning. Youth flees, dies as we die."

John comes to the hall door and peers out into the dimness of the shadowy pines. "Honey," he calls, "are you out there? Good-night. I'm turning in." I call back, "Good-night."

Big and red the moon that is only a little past full pushes over the hill. The desire to taste the night, to drown my tumult in its peace seizes me. Out on the hill-top, alone face to face with the night, and unafraid, I am indeed swept from my moorings. There to the east, where the skyline is so sharply irregular, just where Camel Back marches eternally on the horizon, he makes me think of a city I have never seen. I want to use

his back as a stepping stone to the moon and look down on a play I have just been reading about. When the curtain lifts I want to see those real camels marching past, their background a sunrise in the desert.

The mountains I love, my beautiful, misty mountains, are a giant wall of earth to-night. I want to get over the wall. I want to sit in that theatre, and after the play I want to be swept along in the street with the surging crowd and go into a gorgeous, glittery place and eat delicious things I have never tasted, wearing the sort of dress I have never seen. I want to live. If but for one hour of life I want my youth. I could be part of that pulsing, beating life, part of that splendid friction—man's mind stimulating man's mind.

Back in my room, ready for bed, the light blown out, sitting at the window, I acknowledge to myself that the cause of all the day's emotional upheaval has been Dicky's letter. Dicky's letter that reads:

"In my brave attire I went to meet the hero of my 'Personal.' He got cold feet, Caroline. He did not come. He sent a messenger boy. I had written my foolish heart out to him. I had told him the things I tell you. Yes, I know it is reckless to write like that to a man one never saw. Try being a prune and a potato and a slice of bread, though, before you condemn me.

"His letter is the dearest ever, Caroline. I have read

it over and over. 'Little gypsy child of nineteen, will you be just a little disappointed that the messenger boy is there and not I? Will you believe that I am going against my desire when I stay away? It isn't fair to you that I meet you. It is not fair to the nice little girl homesick for her southland who has never as yet spoken to a man to whom she has not been introduced. The "ad" was just a wager between a man and me. My name will mean nothing to you, but I sign it.'

"The name was Robert Haralson, Caroline. And who can say why things happen as they do? Who can really tell why that door flung open on the Avenue to let an old man out should have stirred me to such rebellion that I who have been well raised by you and dear old mammy should have done such a madcap thing. The name did mean something to me—it brought vague memories—where had I known a Robert Haralson? And—queer world that it is—I got back to my room to find the answer to my question on the table. Mary Tate answered it. When you and good old John squeezed all the money you could out of the thin acres of land that we call home and sent me to school I met Mary. Perhaps you remember. But she was not a special chum. Soon she is coming on to New York for her first visit. She has just left Roseboro and there everybody is talking about Robert Haralson, known at

home still as Bobby. Everybody is saying that he was the cleverest and the most popular lad that the town ever raised. A brilliant future was prophesied for him, but he got a wanderlust and went trailing off to the ends of the earth. Roseboro has just discovered that America's most brilliant writer and playwright, to quote the papers, is none other than the man who as a little lad spilled the family wash—not the clean wash—in front of the Methodist Church as the congregation filed out from a revival service, and almost died of shyness. Roseboro, of course, is shaking congratulatory hands with itself that its prophecy has come true. Everywhere you go they talk of Bobby. Now he seems permanently to have settled in New York and to have found himself. Mary asks me if I have read, 'Heart of the World.' It came out anonymously, as did no end of brilliant stories. But as a playwright he can no longer hide behind his anonymity. Mary is coming to New York soon. She wants to meet him. She begs for my assistance. Her letter closes like this: 'It can be done, Dicky. Gossip says further that shy Bobby Haralson loved one girl like mad. That girl was Caroline Howard.'

"Dear Caroline, I've fallen in love with Bobby's fascinating letters. I've fallen in love with his chivalrous protection of me, with his, 'Little gypsy girl of nineteen.' Right this minute his card, name, and address

lie on my table—and I am lonesomer than I was before I answered the 'ad' but—I won't do what it is in my mind to do. It is your Bobby Haralson."

The clipping Dicky sent says that Mr. Haralson, who is just begining to be known as Mr. Haralson, is at present one of the most interesting men in American literature. That he has achieved distinction both in fiction and in drama. That it is difficult to say in which he holds the more prominent position, that when so many writers seem to have written themselves out, he never seems to write up to the full extent of his powers, that always there is that sense of power held in reserve.

Dicky sent a clipping from a Roseboro newspaper that tells the story of Bobby's heroism on shipboard coming from one of the lands of the Far East. I remember that story. It was some years ago. In mid-sea the engines broke down, the boat sprung a leak, and the men were forced to bail the water from the boat. No ship came near, and one night a frightful storm swept the sea. With the boat at the mercy of the waves the firemen deserted the boilers. It was then that the blood of Bobby's ancestors spoke in him; Old Governor Haralson, Bobby's grandfather, was a leader of men, could sway them. And father told me that Bobby's young father in a charge at the battle of Shilo was a figure he never forgot. He said the young Colonel as he swept into battle at the head of his men wore a

beautiful, uplifted, unearthly sort of expression and that he, my father, had often heard him say he had never felt the sensation of fear on a battlefield. So I know just how Bobby Haralson loomed above the discouraged men that night, just how steady his voice was when he told them that the firemen had deserted their posts saying it was death to go down into the hold, but that he was going, and if they were men they would follow him. Wet and naked and blistered in the water that was waist-deep in the ship's hold, death within and death without, with no hope of saving the ship, with no help possible had help been near, struggling to hold their places along the rope line they hauled the buckets of water up, gaining perceptibly then losing again, but sending a song up whether there was the gain of an inch of water or that much loss—a song that rose above the roar of the sea, hungry for what surely seemed its prey, and the hiss of the great boilers.

When we left Roseboro I was fourteen. Bobby must have been eighteen. A fence divided his house from ours. There was a side gate, for the families were intimate, but, mostly, he leaped it. Do I remember Bobby? I have not thought of him in years, but to-night some little door of the brain long closed opens and out of it comes my almost forgotten boy friend Bobby, like a ghost. Why, just that minute I

saw his little flashing smile. It came right through the moonlit window as a friendly hand reaches out to one on the street of a strange city.

It must be very late, but how wide awake I am. And how sweet the tuberoses there in the border under my window are. They seem to float in still pools of moonlight. As they pour their heavy fragrance over me the fancy comes, born of the silver, moon-flooded night, I suppose, that they are trying to tell me something.

Maybe they are. The tuberose has a personality, strong friends and stout enemies, like some people. There is nothing negative about it. The fancy persists. Ah, I have it! Another little brain door swings wide. But it wasn't a tuberose. Bobby and the big boys, his friends, have been on a tramp, they are again standing under my window, they have waked me with the old familiar whistle. Mother has said I may have the magnolias Bobby wants to send up at midnight if I won't speak to the boys, if the boys won't speak to me, and she has let Bobby suspend a cord from my second-story window. I am fourteen years old again, and through the half-closed shutters I am tugging desperately at those magnolias. Suppressed giggles from the boys, suppressed giggles from me, too, and they ascend with slow majesty. Inside the window the secret of their heaviness is revealed. Candy—tons of it. The

devil gets every inhabitant of Marsville who dances, but in spite of the devil I waltz merrily to my bed.

September 24th.
Sunday.

Yesterday one of those seemingly unimportant happenings that change the current of a life came to me. I look up from the garden seat here among my flowers and my eyes journey from one accustomed sight to another. The long, low, rambling, gray old house drowsing in the mellow, low-lying sunshine, beyond it the path past the honeysuckle arbour that leads straight to the old-fashioned spring house, the colts in the pasture, the cattle at the bars—it is all so familiar that I smile at the words I have written. I am changed, not my life.

Yesterday I walked up to Marsville, a mile away, for the mail, as I mostly do Saturday mornings, and Ellinor Baxter joined me. Ellinor is not a native Marsvillian either. Back in the dim past she came for the health of one of her family. Ellinor has always had musical yearnings, quite a little talent, too. She is the village musician and music teacher, and this year she has an assistant. The assistant is fresh from a bigger life: last winter she studied in Boston, and she has a friend who is doing wonderful things in Grand Opera abroad. It makes Ellinor quite tragic. Yester-

day when we reached the edge of the wood, and the mountain world lay about us like a vast picture, Ellinor flung out her arms as if to embrace all the several hundred peaks in sight and cried out: "Oh, how I hate that wall of mountains! If we could sweep it away we'd get a view, Caroline. We'd see what the world is doing. It's a prison wall. I can't escape. It seems that some hand of iron holds me here. If I had only gone eight years ago when mother's death gave me the freedom to go! Now I haven't the youth to make a new life for myself. Why don't you go? What holds you here?"

"John, dear, good old John, I suppose," I answered slowly.

Ellinor Baxter laughed scornfully. "John would be a less spoiled citizen without you. You are wasting the best years of your life. Soon you will be thirty."

"I am thirty. This is my birthday." I said it defiantly, because, uttered, it sounded so very, very ancient.

Ellinor suddenly softened. "You look a young twenty-five. Some women begin to fade at twenty-five. Some mornings when you rush past to school you look eighteen——

"And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre.

Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wildgrape cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty——"

"Ellinor!"

But Ellinor was in deadly earnest. Her eyes were full of tears. "Child," she said, "get away from here. Love, marry, fulfil your destiny."

For just a moment I stopped and shut my eyes, pretending that a brier had caught my skirt. With shut eyes I knew that deep in the emerald world about me the black gum flaunted its crimson leaves—emblem of change; that the corn in long, straight rows stood hardening in the ear; that the mountains, glistening chain on glistening chain, were shimmering in the morning light. Standing there, I saw more: October's pageant; November's dull, soft tones; the desolation and the grayness that is December mountains' dim forms seen through curtains of rain; January's white, white world—and then the surprise of a snowdrop, the warm, fragrant spring breath of the south wind shepherding flocks of snowy clouds.

"I love it all," I said. And I spoke the truth. Since that August Sunday now a month past, since that earthquake upheaval, I have basked in peace. "I am busy. Most of the year I wake with just the thought of scrambling into my clothes, swallowing my breakfast, and getting to the schoolroom in time. When it is winter it is almost dark when I get home; when it is spring I have my flowers. And there's always John's clothes to mend and my own to make and——"

But with a gesture that was passionate Ellinor Baxter stopped me. "All this may satisfy at thirty, but it won't feed a woman's heart at forty. Then she feels the need of love—contact with a man's broader life. The monotony, the emptiness of life as she lives it alone tortures at forty. I know, for I am thirty-eight. And if she finds this out at forty it is mostly too late. Men pass us by for fresher faces."

I did not know this new Ellinor Baxter who had lifted her mask and given me a peep at the real woman behind it, but for the first time in my life I loved her.

As we turned into Main Street a big automobile was leaving the post-office. Mr. Black and his nice little wife—new people who are summering here—were in the tonneau. I hardly know how it came about, but in what seemed the twinkling of an eye Ellinor and I were in it, too. I did not understand where it was we were going, and when I tried to find out I swallowed so many buckets of air that I gave it up. But it was not of the slightest importance. All that had ever happened to me was of slight importance. I was having my first automobile ride. We seemed to winnow the air like birds: to dip and dart down and around the curves, to soar up the hills with the flash and swiftness of wings. A dozen miles from our village we raced up a stately avenue and ran under a *porte-cochère*—our flight at end.

The lady who came out to greet us was surrounded by dogs, big and little, aristocratic and plebeian, handsome and hideous. After greeting her, Mrs. Black drew me forward and said: "Edna, this is Caroline Howard, who adores every word you write. Edna is my sister, Miss Howard."

I draw a long breath of happiness at thought of yesterday. I live it all over again. I feel sure it was no ordinary spark of liking that leaped between Edna Kennedy and me instantaneously and spontaneously. We had luncheon yesterday on a big wide veranda that overlooks a winding ribbon of a river from the view we had of it as calm and still as if frozen. After luncheon there was music: Geraldine Farrar in "Madam Butterfly"—and the story unfolded before me. I felt the anguish of that poor little waiting and trusting and praying wife. Tetrazzini in the mad scene from "Lucia," and the flutelike voice going high and high and higher, till I bent forward in breathless suspense to drop back in my chair in content at that last marvellously dizzyingly high sweet bird note. Moved by a little burst of confidence I could not control, I told Edna Kennedy that I had never heard grand opera; that I had never been anywhere or seen anything. And then I told her of the thrilly little waves running up and down me that were fairly shouting it was the beginning and not the end of beautiful happenings to me—just as

though I had walked through a wood and come to a beautiful palace, and only stepped up on the portico with my hand still on the doorknob. I told her about Robert Haralson, too: what friends we were when I was little, before we came to live in the mountains. I was dreadfully disappointed that she does not know him. She says few people know him. She says he is shy; that he lives in his work—that the first night of the big play that is making him so rich and famous he ran away from the theatre afraid of the call that authors get to come before the curtain. As we were leaving, Edna Kennedy gathered some magazines from the library table and gave them to me. "He is in them all," she said. "Nobody in the literary and dramatic world is more in the public eye."

I was very quiet coming home, and everything seemed little and mean and isolated and countrified when I got here. I went to my room immediately after supper. I said I was tired, but I was never less tired in my life. I read all the things the magazines said about Robert Haralson, and I looked long at the picture I found in one of them of my oldtime boy friend. I have not treasured any sentimental memories of Bobby. I was little more than a child when I last saw him. It is true that the whole town teased Bobby about me—they called me his little sweetheart and accused him of robbing the cradle

—but I have no treasured memories of him or of any man.

I am indifferent to men, as Dicky says. Always I have turned with distaste from the thought of marriage. In that I think I am different from most women. There have been two—such nice splendid fellows I knew in my college life—who have penetrated my wilderness more times than one. And I? I like them. Life with either would seem to hold much that it withholds now. I have tried to yield, but I cannot; the thought of the nearness of what should be sweet and sacred to a woman brings a wave of physical nausea. For that reason I don't in the least understand what came over me last night as I gazed at a picture only dimly familiar to me. Ellinor's words came back throbbing with their loneliness and hunger. I knew them to be true. I saw myself at forty rushing through breakfast and running the mile to school, pottering about the flowers, mending the clothes—day after day, month after month, year after year spent in dull monotony—and my youth rolled away—my life.

I did a strange thing—I, trained to chain my emotions as we chain wild beasts, in frantic haste I wrote to Bobby. It was not much of a letter—just:

"Bobby, I wonder if the years have swept from your brain cells all memory of the little girl who used to live next door? She'll never get to New York, never!

There's a wall of mountains that she can't scale. But if ever you come to Marsville, whistle across the fence, won't you? The little girl's got one of your stories treasured in her desk without knowing until some one's letter gave away the secret of its authorship. Big congratulations, Bobby!"

I went down to the yard and waked old Harris and paid him to walk to the railroad station, three miles across the gap, and mail it. Now it is late Sunday afternoon and it has been gone almost a whole day. But of course I will never have an answer to it. I am sure Mr. Robert Haralson keeps a female secretary who will scan it coldly and throw it in the waste basket.

September 27th.
Wednesday.

I can't see how it got here in this marvellously short time, but I have Bobby's answer:

80 *Waverly Place,*
September 25th.

My Dear "Miss Carrie":

Just once, if I may—and then I will try to think of you as Caroline.

I was gladder to get your little note than the biggest editor's check I ever saw. Seems to me (after trying very hard) I do remember a small "sassy" girl that used to live next door.

When you ask if I remember you, it reminds me of a story told of Congressman John Allen of Mississipi—

(never could spell Mississip)—is that right? A lady approached him in Washington one day and held out her hand. "Now confess, Mr. Allen," she said, "that you've forgotten all about me."

He had; he knew her face, but his memory wouldn't serve him any further. But, with a low bow, he replied: "Madam, I've made it the business of my life to try to forget you."

See?—as we New Yorkers say.

Well, well, how time does fly! as the little boy said when his teacher told him Rome was founded in 684 B. C. I never expected anything so nice and jolly as to hear from you. It's like finding a five-dollar bill in an old vest pocket.

Isn't it funny that I was thinking of you a little while last week? I had a map, looking all about on it trying to decide on somewhere to go for a few weeks to get away from the city. Mountains for me always! So my eye naturally ran down the Blue Ridge chain. Here's the latest picture of the distinguished Mr. Haralson. Does it look anything like the moonstruck little shrimp that used to hang around and bother you so much? I can remember what an awkward, bashful, sentimental, ugly, uninteresting nuisance I was then. No wonder I couldn't make any impression on you! I've improved a good deal since. In fact, it seems to me that the older I grow the better looking and more fascinating I become. Of course it doesn't seem just right for me to say so, but if I didn't tell you you mightn't ever find it out.

In those days I took life mighty seriously and sentimentally: that's why I always went about looking like a monkey with the toothache; but in after years I learned that life is only a jolly good comedy for the most part, and I began to enjoy it. I believe I'm about five years younger than I was the last time you saw me

—when you left the depot in Roseboro for Marsville. Ernest Cold rode up with you on the train; and I haven't forgiven him for it yet.

It's mighty nice of you to say you would be able to stand seeing me again if I should come to Marsville. I shore would love to ride up and holler "Hello!" over the fence. Lemme see! Trip to Europe—automobiles—steam yacht—Rockefeller's money—no, none of those things sound half as good. But lawsy me! I don't know when I shall ever drap down your way.

I've about decided to go up along the Maine coast fishing with an editor man. I live in a room or two as big as a barn on Waverly Place. I'm so lazy and cool and contented there all by myself with my books and things that I haven't been away from town in two summers.

Now, I'm not going to talk about myself any more. I've been in New York about four years, and I guess I've "made good," for everything I write is engaged long before it is written.

I've been puzzling over your signature. It's the same old name you had when you wore your hair in a plait; and I have two very good reasons for thinking it ought to be different. One is that somebody wrote me several years ago that you had married; and the other is that it isn't possible—it isn't *possible*—that the young men of our old state could be so unappreciative as to have let you escape. But if you are married, please, oh, please get a divorce at once, so you can be "Miss Carrie" again.

I am trusting to your good nature to accept a little book of mine that came out last winter. You don't have to read it, you know. It's just the thing to prop the kitchen door when the wind is in the east.

And, Miss Carrie, some day when you ain't real busy won't you sit at your desk where you keep those antiquated stories, and write to me? I'd be so pleased to

hear something about what the years have done for you, and what you think about when the tree frogs begin to holler in the evenings. Got any tree frogs up there?

Do this, and I'll promise to say "Caroline" next time.

Let me say once more how good it was to hear from you, and that I am, yours sincerely,

ROBERT HARALSON.

September 28th.

The picture and the book have come. The picture is splendid. It dominates my room.

Bobby *was* awfully fond of me. Lots of things I had forgotten come back as I look at the picture—the night he was allowed by mother after some hours of hard begging to take me to Commencement at the Female Seminary in old Roseboro and sat with his arm stretched on the back of the bench. I did not think it would be nice of me to ask him to remove it, and my back aches right now again at thought of the rigidity of my spine through the long hours of that female evening. You would not be guilty of such a ruralism now, Mr. Cosmopolite.

I have written him. It is only polite to let him know that I appreciate the picture and the book.

October 2d.

Monday Afternoon.

Bobby's letter was here this afternoon when I got in from school. Wasn't it marvellous that it could get here? My eyes went straight to the table and I felt

kind of queer and quivery all over when I saw the big square envelope with the bold handwriting that looked as familiar as if I had been getting his letters all my life. Here is his letter:

New York, September 30th.

My Dear Miss Carrie:

Never thought you were going to stir up so much trouble when you did me that big favour of writing a "hello" to me across the mountains, did you? Well, please let me write this time, and if it's too much, give me the teeny-weenyest bit of a hint, and I'll turn my pen into a sword and cut it all out.

Was it cheeky of you to write to me? My dear Miss Carrie, I don't know exactly what the unpardonable sin is, but if you hadn't written, I'd feel awfully anxious about your future.

Right here let me assure you that I'm not one of these confirmed correspondents. Hand on my heart! I vow I haven't written two pages at a time to anybody in years and years. My closest friends complain that I don't even answer letters. But when I hear from—oh, you forbade that, didn't you.

Don't chain up your impulses, dear friend; let 'em skallyhoot around. We don't live more than nine times; and bottles and chains weren't made for people to confine and tie up their good impulses with.

So you shook your head when you read that I was thinking of you last week? All right. Couldn't expect you to believe. But please turn to page 78 and page 131 of the book I sent you, and try to think whose eyes I attempted to describe. Since I saw you last I've seen only one pair of eyes like that; and they—well, they only *resembled*.

Think I'm foolish? Oh, no, I'm not. One can have an ideal if one wants to. I've had one for—years. All I've had since have busted and gone up the flume. Please, Miss Carrie, lemme keep that one. I ain't going to bother you about it. You say those old days are laid away between lavender scented sheets. I can understand that for you. Mine are not. They are fresh and fragrant, dewy and everlasting. I'm not going to insist upon your believing it—shake your head if you want to and give the sun a chance to brighten his rays. I'm superior to luck, fate, history, and time. If I choose to stand under a certain window yet in Roseboro and sigh for the unattainable, no one shall balk me. So, don't you try to bulldoze me, Miss Caroline Howard. If my spirit elects to wander there, please you let it alone.

Do you know that over there in the Ridge of blue and gold you are the most splendidly endowed of all the daughters of the gods? Why? Because my memory tells me that you have (to my memorial eye and mind) all that can be conferred of loveliness; and, according to your boast, you have a new and delectable way of fixing tomatoes. Now, I adore tomatters. I could die for 'em, I nearly have several times. You can't imagine how interested I was in your tomato garden. In your tomato garden. Say—I believe you promulgated some nonsense in your letter about whether I stood under Fifth Avenue girls' windows about midnight and sent up flowers and candies. Why, lemme tell you, Miss Carrie, I've seen 'em and talked to 'em, and had tea with 'em—and lemme tell you—I'd rather set (not sit) across a little table with you and have a tomatter between us with ice and——

Say—I don't agree with you about the nuts. Why, I never saw a tomatter in my life stuffed with nuts. Air they good? The ice sounds all right. And lemme tell

you—I think you're wrong about the Mayonnaise dressing. I have such a respect for tomatters that I must challenge you. French dressing, with green peppers—so say I.

And yet it is no more than Cosmic and Natural Justice that you should be woozy about the proper way to fix tomatters. Perfection has never been attained by mortals. (Now my memory is at work again.) If you could be as I remember you and an expert in tomatters, too, why there would be double perfection, and that's an unknown quantity in mathematics. I prefer to retain my ideal; therefore the deduction is: your tomatters are off their trolley. Still, I'd like to try one. That's constancy and faith. Will you keep one on ice for me, on the chance that good Fortune may allow me to drift down that way?

I sent up yesterday and got the Christmas *Leslies*. Why, I remembered that story, though I didn't recognize the name. It was very sweet and tender. I can see that you like kids. I congratulate you heartily on your work; I hope you will find it profitable and a blessing. You have unquestioned sympathy and a deep and true "humanness." You ought to come to New York, where you will be *in medias res*. There's nothing like being on the ground. You get artistic ideas and associations here that would be invaluable to you. Writing is a bully game. You want to know the dealers. I studied that fact out, and came here. To-day I get five times more per word than when I came. Sister of the pen and stamped-envelope-for-return, I speak wisdom to you. And here is life. Beautiful are the mountains and the moon silvering their tops; but here one learns the value of each upon each. And the moonlight of the mind is the most beautiful. Here art teaches Nature to conform. You could expand and rise here. I do not advise you, but

I speak with wisdom of the markets and the heart. Pardon me if I am scornful of the Mayonnaise, and am dubious about the nuts. I could overlook a stab at my heart with a poniard, but—the tomatter and I have been friends. Yet I could—may I try one the way you fix 'em?

Wish I could have accepted your invitation to sail down on the big golden bubble of a moon, and drap under the cherry tree. Bet a dollar I'd have lit on the rake and the hoe you left there in the grass. Can't you ever remember to put 'em behind the door in the woodhouse when you are scratching around in the garden? I haven't ridden on the moon in a long time. It's on the full now, and I'm afraid I'd slide off. When it gets to look like a slice of canteloupe again, so I can hold on to the ends, I'll try to make that trip. Please spread an armful of hay and an old piece of carpet under the cherry tree so I won't come down with such a jolt when I jump off. Then I'd say something like this:

"Miss Howard, please excuse my intrusion into your section of real estate devoted to domestic agriculture; but the object of my somewhat precipitous descent is to ascertain the identity of a certain youthful and pulchritudinous being with whom at a considerably earlier period I sustained cognizance, and whose identification is relatively dependent upon a tonsorial arrangement in which her tresses retain the perpendicularity peculiar to juvenility at the time referred to."

And you would answer:

"Sir, regretting the futility of your rather incomprehensible errand—which, had you been better versed in the more recent dictates of fashion, might have been advantageously and indefinitely postponed—I must inform you that none of the coiffures that are worn this summer allow any such primitive and adolescent arrangement of the capillary filaments as you refer to in

your preamble; and therefore, as far as the little girl whose hair was in a plait is concerned, there is nothing doing."

I'll bet that's what'd happen to me. And then I'd have to go down to the road and sit on the fence and wait a month to catch the moon back.

Miss Carrie, please, please send me that picture of yourself that you mentioned, or another one. If your heart hadn't been so hard and cruel you'd have enclosed it before instead of talking about it. How can you write those tender and kind little stories when really you are so unfeeling and stony hearted? You knew I wanted that picture. I'm going to tell all the editors I know that your work is a fraud—that you don't feel it at all.

No doubt there isn't a single tear in your eye or the slightest thawing of your heart when I remind you that in another two weeks I shall be treading the pathless wilds of Maine. There in the dense tropical forest an infuriated porcupine may spring upon me from some lofty iceberg, or, becoming lost, I might perish in the snow of sunstroke. Think, Miss Carrie, what an ad it would be for you when the papers printed the news of a tourist found in the woods—an unknown man wearing tennis shoes and a woollen comforter, with 30 cents in his pocket, a frozen tomato in one hand, and a picture of the well-known and beautiful authoress C. H. in the other. It is no less than your duty to your publishers to try and get that ad. So, please send on the picture, will you?

Sincerely yours,

Robert Haralson.

Is it because I live here on the edge of the world, outside of its activity, that I read Bobby's letter over

and over? Is that the reason I search page 78 and page 131 of the book? The eyes of Bobby's heroine are beautiful, and he says they are like mine. It was dear of him to remember the colour of my eyes through all these years. I couldn't have told the colour of his eyes. And I fibbed when I said those old memories were laid away in lavender scented sheets. That's the trouble with a spinster. She can be counted on to run to sentiment with or without encouragement.

Oh, dear, I'm so tired. I want life different—not just to go in and eat supper and look over the lessons for to-morrow and read something and go to bed, as I have done all the nights of the past twelve Octobers and am likely to continue for the next several dozen of them. I fibbed when I wrote Bobby I had memories. I haven't. And I don't want memories—memories that sigh of age. I want joys that dance with youth. I want to sit at a little table and look across—not at John.

October 6th.
Friday.

When I came home this afternoon there was my letter. I could have told Bobby that Marsville young women were hopelessly ancient at twenty-five, that nobody ever looked at them after they were thirty. Instead, I told him about the drummer who tried to

flirt with me on the train. In my effort to get rid of him I moved all over the coach and finally took the last seat, to have him take the last seat opposite. I wrote Bobby that I thought of moving into the Pullman, but that the trip was short and my economic soul balked at the suggestion.

Bobbie answers:

New York, October 4th.

Dear Lady of the Unlavender Scented Memories:

Please send that picture. You have moved to the very last seat in the car and I have picked up my traps and followed you. Will you send it, or are you going to move into the Pullman?

Yours as ever,

B. H.

October 7th.

Saturday. In the Garden. Sunset.

I was up with the day this morning. At sunrise I had breakfasted and was in the lumbering old hack bumping over the miles that end with the trolley that carries us these days into our mountain city and metropolis twenty miles away from this little town. I went in to do my fall shopping, hat and coat suit and some other needed little things. There's a new woman's outfitter that has stimulated shopping marvellously. I saw some stunning things, and I bought—a white silk evening gown, very modern, very clinging, very

beautiful. There's a cunning little fringe of crystal beads on the short sleeves. The dear little skimpy sash-ends have the crystal fringe, too. When I moved about in it and tried it on, the funny little waves of happiness ran up and down my spine and thrilled my knees just as if I really had my hand on the doorknob of that Magic Palace I first divined that day at Edna Kennedy's. Something pagan stirred in me with the tinkle of my barbaric finery. I bought white silk stockings and white satin slippers, too. I spent every penny of three months' hard work, and I borrowed my fare on the trolley from our butcher. If he had not been on I suppose I would have asked the conductor for a loan. The Bible says take no thought of the morrow. I did not. But to-morrow, when icy winds blow, with what shall I be clothed? I shan't worry now. It is too warm and lovely. If I should spend my winter in the state asylum, and I do seem headed that way, my old suit will be quite stylish enough.

There are some La France roses blooming, as lovely ones as I have ever had. I get up from the garden seat and catch their pink satin faces to me and bury my face in their fragrant hearts. I whisper to them: "My poor foolish darlings, why do you bloom so late? Do you not know that all this wonderfulness of warmth, this semblance of summer, is a deception? Do you not know that winter is at hand? What is this absurd

thing blooming in my heart as satiny pink and perfumed as they? The amethyst light has gone from the hills; gray and quiet they wrap their night robes of mist about them and wait for the morning. And the sky, still tender, waits for the stars. And I—for what do I wait?

October 8th.

Sunday. Garden. Sunset.

The day has been hot. It has rained somewhere and there is a superb sunset display. It seems that all the golds and crimsons and purples in the world have been pounded and mixed in a vast mortar and flung in one magnificent wave of colour on the western sky. The mountains are wine drenched. The garden riots in colour. Everywhere colour, warmth, perfume. The glory fades, but the warmth remains. Oh, the moon! Big as a wagon wheel it wavers on the hill, hesitating about its plunge into space. I must go in. Mammy is calling me to supper. Yes, blessed old coloured lady, I am coming! Her eyes are dim. She could not have seen that it was my bedroom rug I put under the cherry tree.

Midnight.

Was it I who put the rug under the cherry tree? Was it I who crept down the stairs in such delicious stealth? And did it all happen just two hours ago when

John's light went out? I had dressed in my tinkling finery, with my hair done like hers on page 131, and I went down to see myself full length in the big old mirror brought from the childhood home. I did not mean to go outside, but the moonlight lay in silver splashes on the portico, and as I stepped into it it swept over me in one great delirious wave, not just ordinary moonlight—sorcery. Standing there in my shimmering gown and satin shoes, I lost all sense of the real me. Drawn by that compelling light that lay on the world beyond the door in a still white flood, I stepped into the fragrant night and sped to the big old cherry tree. No, not I—a red-lipped, shining-eyed, radiant young creature that bore only a physical resemblance to me. Not a leaf dropped to fret the stillness. Nothing stirred, and yet the whole world seemed afloat. I heard the gate's click as it opened. The man's soft felt hat was pulled down low on his brow, shading the features, but I knew him—that is, I divined who it was. Just for a moment I thought him a vision breathed into the night by its magic and my desire to have him there. Just for a moment the solid earth, the misty hills lost foundation. He did not see me so still in the shadow of the cherry tree. Halfway up the walk he stopped, perhaps with the realization that the house was dark, for I had blown out the lamp I carried down. He stood there very still. When he

turned he walked rapidly down the walk and out the gate. I made a swift little rush from under the tree, a swift little rush that sent out a myriad of tiny sounds —that pagan thing in me alive, clamouring for its woman's birthright. I think the gate's sharp click drowned the tinkling call of my finery. He did not glance back. After what seemed an æon of time I heard voices—the faint roll of wheels.

Perhaps I would think the whole fantastic thing a dream were it not for the wicked glitter of the baubles on my poor little frock that lies in a neglected heap there in the moonlight where I stepped out of it.

. . . . . .

October 26th.

Twenty days since I wrote those last words—twenty warm, still, sun-drenched days as like one to another as peas in a pod. The oldest inhabitant fails to remember such another October. But this morning, without the warning of a frost, it has come. The sun floods my desolated and blackened garden. It always hurts me to give up my flower children. I should hear only the pleasantest things at breakfast the morning of a freeze, but this morning after John had gone mammy brought my hot cakes in and told me that Lucius Blake was the author of a story that was spreading over the village like fire. Lucius said

that he had driven the finest sort of a dude down to our house Sunday night, October 8th. Lucius said he came inside the gate, stood there like a stone, and that when he came back to the buggy he said: "I should have warned my friends of my arrival. I suspect from the darkened house that they are absent at Grand Opera." He then offered Lucius ten dollars to drive him to town, and they rode through the night in silence. I should think the silence would have killed Lucius, but he has lived to tell the tale. I am not in the least comforted that mammy, on the pretense that we need sugar, has hurried up to the village to tell everybody that Lucius is a liar—in the language of the mountains a master liar. I am not in the least comforted with anything. Fate, you are a cruel jade to let me put the light out, and I hate you. I have snatched the poor innocent-of-offence gown from its hanger, if it is innocent—I remember that night it twinkled so wickedly—and I have flung it into the fire. I feel wildly happy that Bobby's book smoulders on it. But I have turned my eyes away as a wicked, yellowish-red, forked tongued flame leaps at the wavy lock of hair that always I know escapes Bobby's brushes because it likes to lie on his broad, thoughtful brow.

How odd the room feels without the picture. I've got in the way of looking for the greeting from those

watchful eyes, in the way of seeing the mocking smile on those pictured lips, the minute I open my door. No simple maiden in her charm for you, Mr. Robert Haralson! Do I see you this minute motoring down your brilliant Avenue? And do I see her, the pride of your Avenue? Our uplands do not breed such exotics.

November 15th.

The days drift by like dull-hued birds. There's not a song in the throat of a single one. Dull-hued is the word, for the rains have washed the colour from the hills. And like a giant graystone prison wall the mountains, desolate, rattlesnaky things, stand against the sky. Jack the Giant Killer himself couldn't scale them. Mammy watches me anxiously. She says I am sick. I am—sick for a bigger life. Teaching is routine after twelve years. I haven't any worry. Dicky since her "Personal" escapade is being good, unless some mischief is brewing she has not yet got into trouble over. Some day—not this dull-eyed day—I mean to put to myself the question, "Why have you never said one word to Robert Haralson about Dicky—poor, cooped-up, lonely little Dicky?" And I mean to get an honest answer.

Friday. December 21st.

The gods on Mount Olympus, if it be they that control gray, heavy-lidded days like these, had compassion

on me and let to-day be Friday. I'd have killed all the children in another day, and now I have until Monday to get back to something akin to normal. I must have looked my mood when I came in, for poor old mammy had brought me hot toast and tea and delicious peach jam. I received it with gratitude, but when she began the recital of that well-known story in which she stood and received my great aunt's false teeth in her last hour, when she launched into my great uncle's handing them to her with the words, "Give these into the hands of this faithful servant," I leaped up so abruptly that I frightened her. I wonder if I really meant to pitch the dear, faithful old soul out the window? I am developing temperament, or is it temper? Perhaps it is all due to the outside world. The snow sifts bleakly from a bleak sky. What am I to do with these walled-round-by-winter days? What am I to do with this woman whose outward appearance is mine? She terrifies me. For thirty years I've tended my little garden plot of life in placid content; cheerfully I've hoed my bean and cabbage rows. Now I want to dynamite these homely plants. Where the cabbages stand in rows I want red roses; I can't abide beans a minute longer, and in their stead I would like purple orchids. And there's something else I want: I want to cry and cry on a broad man shoulder—not John's shoulder. Half timidly I glance over my own shoulder

as I write it. My own mother never kissed my father until after they were married, and my grandmother all her life long dressed and undressed behind the shelter of the door of the great wardrobe that is here in my room this very minute, but no reproachful ghosts are gazing at me. And if all the spinsters in this broad land with their battle cry of freedom and suffrage (I've got freedom and I'm willing for suffrage) had had the sort of day I've had with the children—it's been a wild beast of a day and its sharp claws have drawn blood—when twilight came they would do just what I am doing now. They would whisper into the firelit gloom which invites reckless confidences, as I am whispering, "Eve, Eve, you want your Paradise, don't you?" I do solemnly believe that soon or late this moment comes to every woman; I do solemnly believe that she can no more escape this dominant reaching out of her heart, this dominant yearning for that other one in the world of two outside of which the rest of humanity is excluded. Since when have you believed this, Caroline Howard? Honest now. Face Dicky's letter—aren't you the daughter of a soldier?

This time it's a big, blond young German—a baron. A slight accident to his hand brought about the acquaintance. Always, Dicky "did" his hand for him. The acquaintance progressed to the point that he knew her afternoon off. "Of course," Dicky writes, "it

flattered me to find him waiting outside the hospital—and with a taxi."

It seems they had the gayest of drives, but when they turned in at the Pennsylvania Station Dicky demanded the meaning of it. The baron was ready with an answer. He told her that they were going away to an ideal life where they would always be together and always alone. Dicky objected. Her protest was smothered in the depths of the baron's hat, flung quick as magic over her face.

"How I ever emerged from the embrace of that hat with a smiling face I don't know. I must thank a year's training at the hospital for that. I came out game—cool on the outside, at any rate. I said: 'We can't go away together without baggage—think of the scandal of it.' From the depths of the cab he produced a big black bag. But I said, 'That won't help me.' It didn't work. He said in Washington we would buy enough clothes to last me forever. I fell in gayly with his plans. Inside the station he bought tickets to Washington. I tried to get near the ticket window, but he flanked the move. There seemed to be no people in the station. The few that were there were miles apart in isolated little groups. Just before our train was called, standing together as alone as if we were already on the desert to which he said we would go when we left Washington, a stream of incoming people surged

up from the left wing of the station. I felt sure one of the men was Bobby Haralson—he or his double. I asked the baron to let me say good-bye to an old friend, as we were never coming back. He agreed.

"'Aren't you Mr. Haralson?' I gasped. 'If you are, don't you remember the little gypsy girl who answered your ad?'

"'Sure Mike, I do,' he said, and swung his bag into his left hand and gave me a hearty right hand. My face must have shown that something was wrong, for he drew me out of the crowd, put down his travelling bag, and asked me, oh, so quietly, what was wrong. His quiet manner calmed me. As briefly as I could I told him. He grasped the situation in a lightning-like flash. 'Go back to him,' he said. 'Keep cool. I'm on to the job.' Had I been on to my job I'd never have got in that cab. The morning paper says he's a baron all right. It says he's a lunatic all right, too. And he has been sent to a private asylum.

"He took his arrest quietly. It was so unexpected it dazed him. I was so limp after it was all over that Bobby Haralson took me over to the Waldorf and made me drink a milk punch. Then he brought me home. We had a heavenly time, and I promised not to be naughty again.

"At the door, he didn't come in; he said good-bye with that smile that lights and warms up his face—

you remember I told you how reticent and sort of impersonal he is—and he said next time I wanted an adventure just send out a wireless and he would answer. I didn't tell him about you, Caroline. You have tried so hard to make a hoyden into a lady that I did not reveal my identity."

December 8th.

What an odd, spoiled Bobby! I have a letter from him. Last fall—the afternoon I went to town and came back with the ill-fated gown—I sent him the picture. The P. M. (Particularly Mean) letter was the little note that demanded its return after we failed to meet in our promenade down in our yard. Bobby expects an answer by return mail—it is in every confident line of his letter. Mr. Robert Haralson, spoiled darling of your town, once an old lady of my acquaintance sent her husband across the mountain to get some "camfire" for her. The gum was dissolved in whiskey. He drank it and was very sick. I was present when, convalescent, he humbly asked for chicken soup. The old lady, with uplifted forefinger said, "Nary a chicken will ye git."

See, Mr. Robert Haralson? as you New Yorkers say.

Bobby's confident letter says:

As I write, at my left hand is a basket of letters. I have just taken from the basket the last nice one you

wrote me and the awfully mean one you wrote afterward. The others run back a month or two and none are answered yet. My right arm is resting on a cushion, and I am writing with three fingers.

I have been away. In my accumulated mail there were a couple of letters from you, and the photo you sent in the lot. The next morning after I got back I had to send for a doctor. I had got a knock on my blamed old elbow and she swelled up as big as a prize beet at the Roseboro County Fair.

Well, old doc said it was cellulitis, which didn't sound very reassuring. It comes from having the cellular tissues hurt. And every day he done that arm up in plaster and eight miles of bandages. And three or four times he brung along his knives and lancets and was going to carving at it, but I wouldn't let him. I haven't been able to write any more than a rabbit. I'm getting so I can use a small quantity of my fingers now, and this is the first answer to any letter in the basket.

And that is why I haven't written to thank you for the photo, which I appreciate highly, and shall not return as you suggest in your P. M. (Particularly Mean) letter. What's the matter with it? It looks all right to me. I can't suggest any improvement in it. It has lots of your old expression in it, and although the fool photographer did all he could to spoil it by making you turn your head as if you were looking to see if your dress was buttoned all down the back, it's a ripping nice picture, and you needn't want to be "any better to look at than the picture." (Can't you say the mean things when you want to!)

Now, I wish you'd behave, and take your finger out of your mouth and stand right there—turn your toes out—and say you are sorry.

Lemme see!—there was another dig—oh, yes—if I "had been a pauper or a millionaire."

You bet I'm a pauper now, Miss Carrie. Blowed all my money in on my trip, and ain't made any to speak of since except what doc would carry away with him every day.

Getting along all right again, though, now. How's your writing coming on?

Now will you shake hands again, although it's my left one this time?

Yours as ever, R. H.

December 20th.

I have another letter from Bobby. And I didn't answer his last letter. As I read it a wicked little joy steals in on me and grows and *grows.*

New York, December 18th.

My Dear Miss Carrie:

Now get mad if you want to, but couldn't you agree to let somebody call you that? (Bobby has scratched out the "Miss.") That's the way I think of you, and if you insist on being called by your golf and automobile name of Carrie, why, tear up this letter and throw it out the kitchen window over the cliff.

Why didn't you answer my last letter? Rowing on the lake, I suppose, with the gent that comes to see you. I hope the lake will freeze. And I hope the gent—won't freeze. So, there!

I am looking over your last letter to-night, and it's like the breath of a spring wind through a laurel thicket. I'm going to take it page by page and answer it.

The first page contains a quotation from a letter to you from an insect known as a "literary agent." Dear

Carrie, listen to the chirp of the crickets on the mountain, but don't pay any attention to the noise of that tribe. I am fortunate enough not to know this particular duffer that has written such "piffle" (as they say in Chicago), but I've heard about him—and you cut him out. He's an insufferable, measly kid, at the Sweet Caporal cigarette age, and his graft is to stuff you provincial writers (I'm speaking impersonally now) with his taffy so he can get your stuff to peddle around. Don't you believe his trick; and you quit sending him your stuff. He's trying to make you think you've got George Eliot and Mrs. Humphry Ward beat to a batter, when you know yourself it ain't so. Isn't that a sage, oh, what a wonderfully sage remark when he says "you must write your best!"

Don't you believe "that the editors are asking about you constantly, and are more than anxious to see your work." It's not so.

Now get mad again, and when that oldtime smile comes back, read on further.

Mein Gott! what a recollection you have of me! "A tall, slender lad with nice eyes—awfully quiet, and—— Oh, I'll admit the exceedingly fond." Was it a mystery why? Well, I dunno, except because you were so sweet and devilish.

To-day I am as slender as anybody five feet eight and weighing 175 pounds could be, and I've sharp, mean eyes. (I told Bobby that he had nice eyes because I couldn't remember the colour.) I've been taken for a detective lots of times, but I haven't changed so much inside, and if you were on the twentieth floor of the Waldorf-Astoria to-night, and had a string long enough, I'll bet I'd have a magnolia or two and a box of candy to tie to the end of it.

You speak of meeting old Tom in your letter. Well, just a few days afterward I got a letter from him talking

about old days. Said he'd been in New York often and might be back. Lordy! I'd like to see him again. (Back in the old days at Roseboro Tom was one of the whistlers under my window the night I got the magnolias.)

Well, now, Carrie, what do *you* care if Tom pays attention to somebody and likes her? Ain't that the only thing there is that's worth two cents? Doesn't the gentleman that takes you out driving and boat riding ever—ever—talk about how nice the moon looks? Oh, Carrie, never get so you feel like running down such foolishness. After everything is added and subtracted, *that* is the only remainder.

On the next page I find the very wise remark of your friend Miss Baxter (whom I would be glad to consider mine—I mean mein freund!) that you can't write a love story because you know nothing about it. Miss Baxter is altogether wrong but none the less charming. That led me to inclose you a little story of mine—a thing that is apparently egotistical to do—that settles the question beyond all controversy. Read it some time when you are up in the arbour about twilight when they are calling you to supper—but don't go.

On page three of your letter I observe a reference to your picture. Sure, Mike! I asked you for your picture. And I've got it, ain't I? I'd like to see you get it back!

Oh, Carrie, if you "knowed" how folks try to get letters from me and can't, you'd appreciate the delightful toil I take in writing to you. Ordinarily it's just like laying bricks for me to write even a business letter, but when I write to you—lemme see what to say—it's like lifting the lightest feather from the breast of an eider duck and watching it float through the circumambient atmosphere. (That strike you hard enough?)

I'll tell you what, Carrie—(now don't get mad,

Caroline) I need a boss. For the last month I've been so no-account and lazy that I haven't turned out a line. And yet, I don't think it's exactly my fault. I've felt kind of melancholy and dreamy and lonesome, and I don't sleep well of nights. Once I dreamed that I had a magnolia for you and you turned up your nose at it and went away with Jeff—you remember Jeff?

Everybody's Magazine sent down the editor's automobile and took me uptown to a distinguished nerve specialist, who decided that I had been working too hard, and advised me either to take a trip to Europe or some tablets he had in a box. I took the tablets. They didn't taste bad, so I kept on taking 'em, and I ain't a bit worse to-day.

But none of 'em knew that what I needed was just somebody to fix a cushion for me on the sofa, and tell the man with the gas bill that I wasn't in.

You asked me what I get for short stories. I get ten, fifteen, sometimes twenty cents a word, and everything engaged long before it's written.

Now, I'll tell you what to do: kick the mountains over and hurry to New York. It's 50 per cent. of the game to see the editors in person. Right here is the only place on the American Continent where you can live. What are the mountains compared to it? Dear Carrie, kick the mountains over and take my advice. You are far enough advanced to make your way from the start. And I assure you, as I said, being on the ground is 50 per cent of the game.

They call it a lonely city. Lonely! with every masterpiece of art, music, and beautiful things within a block of you! Say, Carrie, chop down the tomato vines and come on. I can get you into every editorial office in town (where you are not already appreciated), and you will make a success. Attend, oh, Princess of the Bluest Ridge, these are not the words of one D.

Hudson the adolescent, but of Bob the Perspicacious, who has seen and who knows. If I didn't think you had the genius to win the game I'd never advise you to try.

There's a line in your letter—"I couldn't know what the boy had developed into." I can only say into one surely no better, unsatisfied, and always remembering the little girl next door.

Please, Carrie, write to me soon, and if you don't like my letter say you condone it, for there ain't nobody up here like you, and I'm awfully lonesome to-night. And so, may I sign myself,

Yours as ever, Bob.

P.S. I'm awfully glad to see by the weather reports that there's a freeze coming. I hope the gent that rows you on the lake will have to buy tacks to put in his oars.

P.P.S. I was in a thanksgiving party where we had a flashlight photo taken. I'll send you one when they are printed.

Do I condone Bobby's letter? The wicked, contraband little joy grows and *grows*.

Christmas Eve.
Midnight.

It is snowing—a real snow. The night outside my windows is one soft whirling blur. At dusk John came in from the twenty-mile-away town. He shook the snow from his clothes like the traditional Santa Claus, and he was just as full of bundles. Two express packages for me in the big, bold hand grown so familiar

set my heart to beating and my cheeks to blushing furiously under John's scalpel eyes.

Since nine o'clock, when John went to bed tired out with his hard day's journey, I have sat here in my bedroom, dim save for the light of the leaping flames and silent save for the sift of the snow piling high and higher on the window-panes. Luxuriously I dive again into the most wonderful box of candy I ever dreamed of; luxuriously I sniff the perfume of the most exquisite flowers I ever saw, across the snow-filled air the village bells ring their faint, "Peace on earth, good-will to men."

To-morrow when I wear my flowers to church, I'll feel like a princess—orchids and lilies of the valley—your princess, Bobby.

Christmas Day. Afternoon.

When my eyes opened this morning the flaming beauty of the east took me to the window—such a marshalling of sunrise banners to do honour to the day. Not waiting for my fire, judging from the sounds in that direction that mammy was having a holiday nap, anyway, I dressed rapidly, high shoes, short skirt, coat and cap, and sallied forth. The landscape stretched before me like a vast white sea, its purity unbroken by footstep of man. It seemed to belong solely to me and a few noisy crows. I marched straight to the post-office.

It was closed when John passed last night. I had a sneaking little hope—but it wasn't there. I got a little note from Dicky, though. She writes that her gift is delayed. It is always. I could never teach Dicky timeliness—always, like Bobby Haralson, she has been superior to time.

The day that I began joyously has been a restless one. I have climbed to the hilltop. Below me the village lies, a crystal toy town in the lap of crystal hills. My eyes travel down the chain of glistening hills to Camel Back. Wise old comrade, I do believe he knows. Anyway, it is a relief to tell him. "Camel Back," she writes, "A chance encounter at the theatre with Bobby Haralson in which I still conceal my identity." Camel Back's snowy hump twinkles as though he laughs; above him the clouds that have seemed to drift aimlessly form a fairy castle. Its turrets and dome glitter in the sunset's dying fire. I can trace a door—a vast, closed portal. How ridiculous that a trick of the clouds could thrill me! Slowly the door has opened. I can't explain the lovely magic of it, but there in the white stillness some words that Bobby wrote rolled over me in a great, mounting, singing wave.

"You have sympathy and a deep and true humanness." If Bobby is not mistaken! If it could be! Almost solemnly I turn from my mountain, with its castle fading from the sky, and take my way home.

January 20th.

Every minute that I can spare from my school duties I work at my book in a fury of enthusiasm. Just as the snow made the village so beautiful on Christmas day, something within me no longer sees the frailties of the mountain people with whom my lot is cast. Their kindness through all the long years comes to me instead. So I call my little book "The Window." I look out and see beauties I never saw before, and the sun pours in and warms me.

January 25th.

I am working at it night and day. It grows amazingly. "Child," some one said to me yesterday, "I heard ye was writin' a book. Ain't plenty o' books in the worl', 'thout rackin' yore pore brains to write anuther?"

Almost, I gave back indignant answer; but I have learned of my little book—of my little book that flows in my veins and runs down through my finger-tips, sometimes to laugh and exult, sometimes to sob and sigh.

February 15th.

My book is written. It was pure joy. It is very simple—just the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of this spot isolated from the big world by its wall of mountains. I owe much to my book. Winter still holds the world, but flowers bloom inside me. Not the orchids and roses I demanded of life when I wanted to

dynamite my garden plot, it is true, but some old-fashioned pinks that make these February days sweet and smelly ones.

March 1st.

Did it ever happen to anybody before? I have knocked and knocked at editors' doors; I have waited months and got my stories back, too. Two weeks, and I hold in my hand a telegram from Bobby's publishers: "Your little book is ours, and it's love at first sight."

April 1st.

It is advertised in the magazine section of the *Times*. How it flashes out to meet my eyes: "The Window" —a certain simplicity of expression—a realism that touches with delicacy and pathos things that we feel are the actualities of life.

John comes in and brings Dicky's letter: "Caroline Howard! And not to tell me! Such a peach of a heroine, Caroline. How'd a sedate old thing like you catch that spirit of youth? Your heroine flames like a red, red rose. And what do you know of love's sweetness and its fierceness?"

What do I know? I go indoors and gaze soberly at the sedate old thing that is I. Then I go in search of mammy. "Mammy," I call, "I *must* have somebody to talk to. They say you can look right into the shadowy interiors of the mountaineers' cabins; that

you can see the vague objects take shape in them because I've got the atmosphere so well." Mammy is feeding the chickens. "What is atmosphere, honey?" she asks calmly. "Oh, feed your chickens," I say, disgustedly, and, calmly, she obeys.

By some queer trick our publishers, Bobby's and mine, have put us together—my little book by his big book. I have not heard from Bobby since Christmas. No doubt all his fingers are now out of commission.

Just after Christmas I was in town and I saw a big splendid picture of Bobby in a bookdealer's window. I know the man, and, shamelessly, I told him Bobby was my first cousin—my favourite cousin. He gave me the picture. Bobby is in his old place on my mantel. And, as before, he dominates the room. There are times when I almost feel his presence, distinct, encompassing. My life has not many idle moments, but when these little lazy let-down minutes do come, when I sit by the fire at night, the school papers all corrected, just before I go to bed, I find awaiting me, giving me the feeling that it is always there, patiently abiding its moment, this nearness to Bobby. It draws near, not like an alien thing unsure of its welcome, but it comes as if in answer to a call. How well I know Bobby Haralson! Times spent together, when apart, how close they come. If disaster overwhelmed him he'd hide his hurt under a froth of gayety, his lips

would mock with smiles. Once my mother laughingly called my father to see the pretty picture a little sewing girl made as she slept—her beads of prayer in her hands. Smilingly my father shook his head. My mother loved my father for that chivalry to a little sleeping work girl. Bobby is like that—human enough to advertise through a newspaper for a girl "pal" and then too chivalrous to meet her. The subtle gradations that make a gentleman!

April 1st.

All the way from school this afternoon I kept telling myself there would be a letter from Bobby on the hall table, and then I would tell myself it was preposterous after this long silence that I should look for his letter. But there it was. And he has been sick. I feel his nerves in the letter.

If Bobby has been reading my last two letters, which he hopes I won't make my two last, one was most certainly an old one. Of course I thanked him for the Christmas flowers and candy. It's a bad sign, Mr. Book-writer, for a man to con over old letters. He's either in his dotage, or he is in love. Is Bobby in love? Here's his letter:

West 20th Street.
New York. April 1st.

DEAR, DEAR CARRIE:

(Dear, dear Carrie, indeed! And not a line from him since Christmas.)

Here's my right hand being held up:—Please listen! To-day for the first time in six weeks I've had my trunks unpacked and have sat down at my desk clothed in my ordinarily sane mind, and been able to find pen 'n ink 'n paper to write with and on. I've moved four times since I lived in Waverly Place; and have been driven from post-office to pillow by the—noise of elevated trains, waggons (notice the English two g's), trams (also English), and cries of hucksters (mostly Dagoes). At last I have found a quiet haven; and the first thing I do (of course) is to dig your last two (please don't make it "two last") letters and read 'em some more.

I have answered your letters and written you dozens in the spirit; but when it comes to spreading the ink, I know I've been as the old darky song goes, "A liar and a conjurer, too." There are periods of time when the sight of a pen or an ink bottle strikes me to stone. Will it be some slight excuse for not having written to one of whom I have thought by every mail, if I assert that not for months have I written a line for publication except one little short 2,000-word *rotten* story? It be true.

Oh, some sort of nervous condition—can't sleep nor nothin'! Oh, yes, ma'am, thank you; feelin' heaps better now. I live within a few doors of Broadway, but on such a quiet street that the little clock on my desk ticking sounds as loud as a cricket chirping under the honeysuckle vine on your porch on a fall night.

Don't you think you might come up this way some time? Ain't there some of your folks that live around here? Seems to me there was. I'd rather see you than to have a bushel of diamonds. And if I can get a string on you I'll tie more magnolias and gumdrops to it than Roseboro ever saw. Say—please come, won't you? I do so long to see a human—a Heaven-sent,

home-bred, ideal-owning, scrumptious, sweet, wholesome human with a heart such as I know you are—or, in the words of the poet, "one of whom you are which." The folks up here are all right and lots of 'em are good to know, but—they ain't got tar on their heels, Miss Carrie, ma'am.

I've been thinking of running down to the Bluest Ridge for two or three weeks as soon as it gets warmer here. I want to go up somewhere in the mountings and have a quiet time with the sunrises and the squirrels, and I want to see some morning glories on a board fence. I've tried the dinky little hills they call mountains up here, and they ain't no good. You can't take forty steps in the wildwood without stumbling over a sardine box or a salmon can; and the quantity of Ikeys and Rebeccas that you scare up in the shady dells is sure something fierce.

If I happen down in your range of mountings may I drop in and see you? I need to get away from town for a while, and I certainly would rather be there than anywhere I know of.

Why don't you cut loose and come to N. Y? This is the only place to live. You can choose the kind of life you want and live it, and get all there is of existence. Come on and get in with the bunch! You can get a studio in a top story and raise tomatters on the roof if you must have 'em. I'll help you tend to 'em. Come on and learn the beauty of a quiet life. Get away from the feverish round of gayeties that you've been accustomed to—men taking you out rowing (wasn't he tall and dark, with a drooping moustache?) and men coming in the Pullman cars and sitting close by your side—oh, I haven't forgotten about it! Often I've gotten out a couple of dozen sheets of paper and started to write to you, when I'd think: oh, what's the use—she won't want to hear from me—somebody's ripping the

buttonholes out of his collar trying to pull up car windows for her, or pulling on the wrong oar and rowing the boat into a mud bank where they'll sit for hours until some plowman plods along and drags them out.

Please, dear Carrie, write to me some more. If you had saved all the letters I've written to you in the spirit you'd have a stack as high as the big sunflower by the garden gate. Write and tell me exactly what you think about when you take your hair down and sit on the rug at 11:30 P. M. before the fireplace. And I'll tell you what I think about when I set the bottle of Scotch on the table and light the last cigar at 2 A. M., when the distant cars and cabs sound like the ripples of your mountain streams on a still summer night.

I send the ghost of a magnolia up to your window.

Yours as ever, BOB.

April 4th.

I find a P.S. from Bobby this afternoon and the ghost of a magnolia that failed to get in the other letter.

MA CHÉRIE MLLE. CARRIE:

Here's a magnolia.

I know you believe I am "without the pale" and "N. G.," but I write again because I do not believe that I am.

If you come to N. Y. this spring I reckon as how you won't want to see me because you think I am short on etiquette. All right for youse! I'll watch all the rubberneck coaches, and when I see a little pink-cheeked girl in a straw hat with daisies on it and a white dress with a pink sash, chewing sweetgum—(for shame,

Bobby)—and making eyes at the Brooklyn Bridge, I'll know who it is, and look at you all I please.

So, au revoir, Miss Howard. I am still yours sincerely.

R. H.

April 5th.

This sweet spring afternoon I cannot stay indoors. In her joy the earth is like the mother of a new-born child. A light, restless wind has piled snowy, errant clouds above the mountain tops, the little green leaves are uncurling, the sun shining as it shines only in the spring and on an awakened world—and the birds—— A lover bird, just the kind to capture a little lady bird's heart, has been pouring out a passionate mating song for two whole days. He is in the cedar tree not far from my window. His little lady love answers from the willow in the pasture. He is trying to make her come to him, I feel sure. Will she?

April 6th.
Saturday Afternoon.

My lover bird is gone from the cedar tree. Down in the willow's cool depths, above the spring where the colts and cattle drink, there are such flutterings, such joyous little outbursts of song that I smile in sympathy. Wise, wise, little woman-bird. Since the coming of these last letters there's been a stealthy fear following

at my heels—the fear that I might go to New York. I could make my book an excuse, and I have some money. I have spent very little since that extravagant outburst last fall. And I could make Dicky an excuse. Dear little Dicky, who is as joyous over my book as if she herself had written it.

I will not go! The fate that let me put the light out the night that Bobby came here is a wicked, wicked jade, but I defy her! I'll stay right here!

That Bobby should remember a little girl's hat through all the years! That day so far in the past, when I left Roseboro and Ernest Cold was on the train —Bobby said he was; I don't remember—Bobby put a real daisy in my hat band when he came in the train to tell me good-bye, and he said——

That stealthy fear that I might go to New York is stealthy no longer. Boldly it has stalked out in front of me and clutched me by the throat.

April 15*th.*

This morning when I pushed up the shade in my berth I was greeted by the sun's big, round, inquiring eye. "What are you doing here?" he seemed to be asking. I hastened to explain that my going to New York was in no way connected with Mr. Robert Haralson; that he is not to know I am there. Somewhat shamefacedly I explain to that red, watchful eye that

Dicky is not to know I am there either. Dicky doesn't need me now. Her last letter is as joyous as the lilt of a lark.

My publishers (how fine it sounds) want some little changes made in the book, and for that sole reason I am on a Pullman bound for New York.

So accustomed am I to space that I could not be boxed up in lower twelve last night, so I took the whole section. This morning as I stood on my bed reaching up for my skirt the train took a sharp curve that landed me in the aisle of the car. Visions of a hospital danced with a million stars before my eyes. A young, lovely girl helped me back into my berth. No one else, not even the porter, had witnessed my humiliation. In a little while, in spite of my aching head, I collected my senses sufficiently to get to the dressing-room. Making myself presentable was a clutching sort of experience. I have not spent the night in a train since I was eighteen, and I must have been more agile then. When I emerged from dressing I felt as a mountaineer's baby must feel when it is being hushed to sleep. If you have ever seen one being flung from side to side of its rude little cradle, threshed about like a weaver's shuttle, then you understand perfectly.

The girl was waiting for me; she proposed that we breakfast together. In the dining car, under the stimulus of the coffee, which stopped my headache, I told

the girl about my little book and that I was going on for my first trip. Back in the coach we were the only passengers and we sat together; she told me about herself. She is going to New York, too. She is going to join the great army of workers. She is so sweet and young, so girlish and refined, so beautifully although simply dressed, that I think my face must have shown my astonishment and regret. That she should be adrift in a great city seemed too dreadful—one of its labourers, and on small wages, in desolate lodgings, isolated from all social life with her kind. I thought of the city's temptations for a lonely, beautiful girl. And I said: "Child, go back to your family. Haven't you somebody?"

"I have my little baby that lies in the cemetery." Her young laugh rang bitter. "I am all alone. I left my husband—he didn't love baby and me any longer. I mean he didn't love me. He adored baby. She adored him, too. She used to say, 'I'm des trazy 'bout my dear daddy.'" She looked from the window; I could see her chin quiver. When she turned back to me her voice was quite steady. "I want to be fair to him. When baby died it hurt him cruelly, and always when I place flowers in the little urn at the head of baby's grave, I find beautiful ones in the urn at the foot. I know, although he does not love me any longer, that it hurts him for me to be a wage-earner. But I

can't take his money. You—you don't believe in divorce?" Her voice was half timid.

I was silent. It is something I am so ignorant of. The old Ducketts are the nearest approach to divorce that we have in our mountain world. Recently, without a word to any one, that poor old lady left her home and moved to a little house across the street. Our village has wondered and gossiped about this rupture after sixty years of life together. Poor old lady, she slips in the back door of his house when he is sitting at the front door, and does up the work she has done for sixty years; then she slips home again.

"A woman can't judge"—the girl's voice with a defiant note in it brought my thoughts with a start back from the Ducketts, and to her—"unless it is her own problem. She, the other woman, wanted him to leave baby and me. He dropped the letter on the floor and I picked it up and read it. I don't know why I did it. I had perfect faith in him. She said all her happiness was at stake; she eliminated our happiness—baby's and mine."

"But, child"—my mind took a wider circle than it had ever had need of in Marsville—"any woman might fall in love with another woman's husband and try to take him from her. I know a coloured woman whose husband beats her, and when I try to make her leave him and live on a nice little place we have and do

our washing, she says she would leave her old man but that she might not find another, that husbands is so 'scase.' They must be from the way some women behave. Perhaps your husband was not at fault."

The lovely colour mounted to her face, it quivered as she told me that he had acknowledged it. We were both silent then. But presently I asked if he had gone to the other woman. She murmured no.

"He says that he is penitent." Her eyes were stormy. "He begs me to take him back. Upon what foundation would I build my faith in him again?"

I think my own answer surprised me. "Bodies sometimes sin when souls are clean," I said. "It could have been a passing sin of the body that did not touch the spirit, which is still true to you. If the spirit sinned he would not want to come back—he would not be sorry. Oh, child, don't you see?"

"I never—did see—it like—that." The girl's words trailed like broken winged birds, her face paled.

We were under the shed in Washington and a solitary passenger, travelling bag in hand, was coming down the aisle of our coach. At sight of her, for he did not know me, his face whitened, too. In one great throb of my heart I took in the situation. I knew that he was her husband, and that he loved her. I saw it in the flash of his face at sight of her—a blind man given

back his sight might look out on his restored world with a look like that.

In a lightning-like flash of time I had leaped to my feet, pushed him into the seat where I had been, and, without in the least knowing what I was saying, I heard myself say: "You foolish children. Go back to the little grave and put the two urns for flowers together. Then start life all over again."

I left them staring into each other's eyes in a sort of mesmerized trance, and went into the next coach. When my eyes cleared of tears I saw that the bright sunlight world beyond the car window was filled with yellow butterflies. In their circling they made a great golden wedding ring. The sweet prophecy seemed mine—not belonging to the people I had left back in the other coach. At lunch they asked me to come to their table, but I smilingly refused. When two people have just been caught up in a golden chariot and given passage direct to Paradise there is no room in the vehicle for outsiders.

I could not grind under the river and get out in the heart of the city, as the advertisements say. I had to see the skyline from the Jersey side. How wonderful it is as it glitters in the soft spring light—a proud wonder city that rests on great, tossing waters. And there lie the docks. I can read the names of the different lines on the dark little houses. And far down the

stretch of moving water I see a gallant little tug assisting a great vessel out to sea. A sort of trembling seized me. Like a vision that fades, all thought of the life that lay behind me—John, mammy, the little mountain village—slipped away. As the boat drifts near and nearer to that white wonder city I want to fling the people huddled on the seats, apathetic as sheep, into the water. I want to cry aloud, "City, city, I am coming!" But they wake up at the dock. How alive they are! I am alive, too. I am over the mountain wall. At last I am part of the big, alive, throbbing world.

April 16th. 12 P. M.

Late yesterday afternoon when I ran up the steps of 30 West Twentieth Street and the door opened and closed on me, my one sensation was relief. I had taken a cab at the ferry and I had marvelled at the dexterity with which the cabby turned and twisted through the dingy streets. Safe, not kidnapped, money still in my bag, the wonderful adventure of getting to my destination without adventure accomplished, I stepped from that cab. The cabby took my trunk from the top of his hansom, banged it on the sidewalk, accepted the dollar we had agreed upon, and waited. I waited, too, politely. Suddenly he turned very red and climbed to his perch, swearing roundly.

As I followed Miss Jackson up the stairs to the third floor I asked her why he did that. She answered vaguely that they were rude.

I came to Miss Jackson's because her mother and my mother knew each other, and because it is eminently respectable. As we climbed the dark stairs my elation dropped from me. The hall needs the winds of heaven to blow through it. Coming back to dinner, I fairly groped through the dimness. But the dining-room was bright and cheerful. All the people seemed young. They were very gay. At dinner the whole talk was of the theatre. As I have not been to a play since I was eighteen, I sat stupidly quiet. Everybody went out after dinner—most of them to the theatre. Miss Jackson went, too. Up in my room I leaned from the window and tried to realize the wonderfulness of being in New York. Below me the street was dark, but far away across the housetops I saw a glow that I took to be the lights of Broadway. After a long time I stole down the dim, depressing stairs. I opened the door, let in the sweet, cool April air. I don't know how long I stood there looking out at the dark, deserted street. I thought of it as a siren of the sea, calling, luring to it the youth of our wide, free land. My mind went to my little room up two dark flights of stairs. I was paying ten dollars a week for a room just about the size of the rug in front of my fireplace at home. What

was the size of the working girl's room who paid five dollars a week? How many flights of dark stairs did she have to climb? I seemed to feel the city—the city that I have not yet seen. I seemed to feel its immensity—stretching away, street after street, in overpowering sameness the length of the island. I thought of the overcrowded East Side and the foreigners herded like cattle, overflowing into the streets, and then I thought of Bobby—or had I been thinking of him through all my thoughts?—jostling in the crowded streets, loitering, listening, feeling the beat of the city's great heart.

When I closed the door and came down the hall I saw the telephone in spite of the dimness. Almost before I knew it I had found the number I sought, my hand was on the receiver. But I did not take it down. The memory of a bright-eyed little lady bird who waited for her lover to come to her restrained me. I must be as wise as she.

I ran up to my room. A fog had crept in from the sea. The river must be near. The calls of whistles and horns came shrill and often. They seemed to give anxious warning. The city *is* a siren. It wrapped itself closer in this white fog sheet of mystery and it called to me. Hastily I donned coat and hat, ran down the stairs and out on the street. I did not hesitate—to hesitate was to go back. In front of me, not far away, another street opened. I reached it, stood

still for a moment; a wraithlike little figure hurried past. "What street is this?" I asked. Wraithlike he sped on without a reply. I hurried after him, caught him by the arm. "What street is this?" I insisted. "And which is up and which down?"

"Whut's de matter wid y'nut?"

Humbly, I told him that I was a stranger; that I lived near and had just walked out for a little glimpse of the city. He told me to keep straight ahead until I came to Twenty-third Street, and stand there a while till the hayseeds fell off me. I gave him a dime. He graciously allowed me to accompany him. The city street widens beautifully at Twenty-third. It had seemed like one of our narrow mountain gulches. I gave my little lad another dime. I wanted to be told so much. The open space, vague in the fog, is Madison Square; the street that rolled away into the gloom, the Avenue, and the white, white foggy flare of light, Broadway.

Some weight of the city's loneliness fell on me as I retraced my steps alone. The fog seemed denser—it might have been because the light lay behind. A few blocks down, as I turned into my own street, my own audacious thoughts brought me to a standstill. If I kept straight on I would come to Washington Square. An old schoolmate lived there.

I had no difficulty in recognizing the Arch, the cross

on the church, the light that burns always. I found the number. I would have thought I had made a mistake, but I have written it so often. I went up the bare, worn steps, rang a jangly bell. A slatternly woman came to the door. Back of her I could see a dingy hall lighted by a blinking gas jet. She called my friend loudly. There was no reply. She said her work was heavier in the spring, that she was often very late.

I had pictured my artist friend in her studio home surrounded with comfort. "Hasn't she a studio?" I stammered. The woman laughed loudly. "Her room, third floor back, ain't no bigger 'n yo' hand. She paints an' sews an' cooks, eats an' lives an' sleeps there, 'cept when she got jobs out."

I turned and fled. I was trembling so I could hardly stand. Such a fragile, lovely creature—my friend back in my school-girl days. A joyous young creature, fashioned for joy. I did not want to see her; I knew instinctively that she did not want to see me.

On the street again, out of the foggy darkness, a shadow lurched toward me. I shrank against the building I was passing. It bent and looked into my face, laughed drunkenly, and passed on. I tried to move. My limbs had taken root. As I stood there flattened against that wall I heard cautious, descending footsteps, whispering voices. Some people were com-

ing down nearby steps, and I was glad. I would follow close behind them. After what was to me a very long time, as they did not pass, I went in the direction of their voices, until I stumbled over a dark mass that lay in my path. Something told me. The slow, cautious steps, the whispering voices—I dropped to my knees on the pavement. The face I lifted and looked into was a young girl's. She was unconscious. I sprang up. There was movement in my limbs now. I ran, breathless, into a man. I caught him by the arm, pleading with him to hurry; I dragged him to the girl on the pavement. I gasped out all I knew.

He took a flashlight from somewhere about him, knelt, looked at the girl, and I—I looked at the pool of blood widening on the pavement. I had not seen it before. She was dying. I dropped down by her, too. "Oh, poor little girl," I cried, "why did you come to this city of Gomorrha? Why didn't you stay at home?"

"See here"—the light flashed full in my own face, the low, cold voice bit into my spirit as a bullet of steel might have burrowed in my flesh—"how do I know that what you've told me is on the level?"

Stupidly I stared at him. Whose face was this—as familiar as my own viewed in the looking-glass?

The eyes looking into mine were suddenly confused, the apology he gave murmured. He stared as though

I bewildered him. He pushed his hat back. I hadn't recognized Bobby Haralson, but I knew that lock of hair on his brow. Had I not once watched a flame devour it? Head and heart awhirl, I smiled at him. "Mr. Haralson," I said, and I laughed outright. "I am on the level."

There was the sound of approaching footsteps. He flashed the light out. "So you know me?" he said.

"Who does not?" I answered. "But you do not know me, honest, now."

"I do—and I don't," he said.

Not far away a figure loomed; it brought us back to the poor little girl that lay there so quietly between us.

"You must get away, quickly. Officer!" he called. His voice has a carrying quality if it is so low, for soon an answering hail came through the fog.

"Will you go? Go!" he commanded. "I'll see this through."

"I can't," I said, and I suddenly knew that I spoke out of a vast content. "I'm lost. It's no use to tell me west. I don't know west."

"West what?" Again his words bit into me like they were steel.

"Twenty." The officer was only a few steps away and Bobby fairly forced it from me.

"The Arch, the Avenue, Twentieth Street, then to your left."

Obediently, I did it all. I am safe at Miss Jackson's. But, oh, will I ever sleep again? When I close my eyes I see the girl's fair little face, that widening pool of blood; and then I see Bobby's eyes—the puzzled stir of memory in them.

April 17th.

I fell asleep at daylight this morning. When I waked the breeze was tossing the curtains, the sun shining, there was a sense of joyousness in the morning. I shopped with an agent—I could not have shopped without one. We lunched at a cunning tearoom just off the Avenue. I ordered just about what mammy would have for a guest of ours: soup, broiled chicken, two vegetables, a salad, a sweet, and coffee. I nearly fainted when I saw my bill. And then the tip! I would not have given it, but I saw it offered at a nearby table. I was confused to give it, but the pretty, refined looking girl did not seem to mind accepting it.

This afternoon, by appointment, I met Mr. Elliott. Mr. Elliott is a member of the firm. He is young, tall, slender. Somehow I thought all publishers were middle-aged, stocky as to build, and with close-cut white moustaches.

Mr. Elliott asked me if I had ever dined at Mouquin's. His face was a compliment when I told him that like a little mountain boy of my acquaintance I

had never "ben nowhar nur seen nothin'." I *do like* Mr. Elliott. My heart is almost leaping out of me! I drove straight to Mrs. Christopher again. She told me all the literary people go to Mouquin's. If Bobby should be there to-night! If we should meet!

One A. M.

Out of gratitude to Mrs. Christopher I must acknowledge that the girl who looked back at me from the mirror to-night was a stranger to me. Mr. Elliott did not know her, either. As I came down the boarding-house stairs—the parlours at present are occupied by people from the South and the stuffy hall is the only reception-room—I flushed under his gaze. It is most bewildering to emerge from a Marsville spinster to a New York belle.

Mouquin's. A confused memory of a flight of steps, a clutter of tables, a sea of faces.

"Aren't you hungry? Don't you like your oysters? It is a trifle late for them."

We were seated. I knew that. It was Mr. Elliott's voice. I knew that, too. I was glad, although he seemed so far away, that I had not lost him. The plate that was rising, falling, lurchingly, drunkenly, held oysters——

"Drink your cocktail." Out of the blur of things he pushed it toward me. Obediently I drank it. I saw

that the oysters numbered six, that their shells were as pink and polished as a lady's finger-nails. Obediently I ate them—the oysters, not the shells.

"What makes you so quiet to-night? But maybe you aren't having a good time?"

With the help of the wine that sparkled and bubbled at my right hand, blessed little helper in time of need, I did not have to give account of my appetite again; I was making quite respectable headway with my chicken. Feverishly I assured Mr. Elliott that I was having the loveliest time but one I'd ever had in my life.

Mr. Elliott beamed. "Will you tell me about that time?" he asked.

But women have their little reserves. The lovely time to which I had reference was a mountain storm I once survived, on Craggy, six thousand feet above sea level, separated from my party, having followed a cattle path by mistake, and—*alone*. This time was just as lovely as that. Then, after a terrified scurrying here and there, I had gone back to the mountain top to wait. Out of what had seemed an innocent sky an electric storm broke. Lashing his steeds with whips of fire, Apollo drove them across the boiling heavens. At each ear-crashing report of thunder the earth threatened to crumble, hurling me down through bottomless space. With the sharp hissings of snakes the lightning

fell about me. Rain-drenched, storm-torn, but too terrified to brave the electric fires darting across the mountain's top to what seemed safety under the big rock where a flock of frightened sheep huddled, I took the storm in the open. When it had rolled away the sheep no longer huddled—I was indeed alone—they lay still.

"Does it meet your approval?" Mr. Elliott put the direct question to me, and somehow I knew it had been asked before. I looked down at my plate helplessly—we had reached the salad course—I tried to rouse my laggard brain. Approval of what, and what was approval?

"It gets my goat!" The words came from my lips. My ears heard them. And the fright of the foolish words cleared my brain.

"What!" There was astonishment, there was amusement, there was also a puzzled intentness in the eyes that looked into mine, and I stammered that the girl who sat at the next table—the girl who looked so cultured and smartly got up—had just said it, and that it was new to me, but it sounded like an idiom of the street.

With that careless, satiated New York glance Mr. Eliott's eyes swept the girl. "Beef to the heel," he said heartlessly.

"Beef to the heel!" That puzzled me, too.

We had drained our coffee cups when two people who sat at a table behind us passed—a man and a woman—Bobby Haralson and Dicky. I recognized Bobby as I came in; the lovely droop of Dicky's back is not unfamiliar to me, either.

"That's Bob Haralson—you've heard of him—one of our biggest men, and his biggest work is still in him. He's the nicest, most lovable, queerest fellow you ever did see. He has hosts of friends, but mostly, he lives to himself. He'd give his last dollar to a friend and go hungry himself; and once I knew him to refuse to be introduced to a rich fellow of power in the literary world because that man belonged soul and body to a corporation—had been bought. That's Bob Haralson! I often see him here, but I never saw him here with a woman before. Come to think of it, I never saw him anywhere before with a woman—not much in his line, women. But they seemed to be having a corking time. I never saw him so animated. That little witch—pretty, wasn't she?—has got him going. I'd have asked him over to be introduced had he been alone."

As we left the restaurant Mr. Elliott asked me to go with him to a little theatre where the one-act plays were all thrills. I couldn't tell him that if I had any more thrills he'd probably have to call an ambulance and send me to a hospital; I couldn't explain that as

far as I was concerned the play was done, curtain down, and lights out.

We went. We sat in darkness. The darkness was a great relief. Mr. Elliott could not see me. I sat there with tightly shut eyes until, at a stir among the people about me, I heard some one say a man had fainted. "It gets my goat!" I murmured. Fortunately there was quite a little stir about us and Mr. Elliott did not hear me.

April 18th.

Some hours ago, when I left New York, having decided to run up to Plymouth and finish up the work on the book by the sea, Mr. Elliott put me in the coach, having showered me with books, flowers, and magazines. I opened the flowers in the cab, and I stared at them and at him.

"Don't you like them?"

Did I like orchids and lilies of the valley? Bobby's Christmas gift to me? I pulled up. I wasn't going to be beef to the heel. I joined the New York procession—and I think I made good.

There's a little slit of a mirror in the coach, right here by my chair, and I take a peep at myself. Blessings on Mrs. Christopher, I don't look like a spinster, and from Marsville. And then—then I bury my face in nice Mr. Elliott's flowers, drinking in their per-

fume, and splashing them with some very big and salty tears.

April 25th.

I have spent the morning in Plymouth's quaint old graveyard—such a soft, sunny, springlike morning. I have looked at the dim old slabs that bear testimony to the virtue of departed wives. I am sitting on the grave of a virtuous wife now, looking past the stones, past the big rock the nimble Pilgrims leaped on when they landed on free soil, far out to where sea and sky meet. Had I been a Puritan maid I would have said to my lover when we climbed to this hill soft days like this and looked to sea: "Dear boy, with my heart I give you all that women who are like me give to one man—the thoughts I have kept for you, the lips I have kept for you. If you had a great searchlight and should throw it back over the road of my life there's not a single little bend that it would shame me for your eyes to see; but when I'm dead, don't put my virtue on a tombstone."

April 26th.

This has been a heavenly day. Mr. Elliott came to Boston on business and ran down to Duxbury to see some friends of his, and all of them motored over to Plymouth and got me. I lunched at the loveliest home in Duxbury. The sea was almost in the back porch. Mr. Elliott came back in the machine with me

and took the train for Boston. When he left he held my hands in a mighty close friendly clasp, and he said—never mind what he said. It is lovely of Mr. Elliott to be so good to me, and it's comforting down to my toes. For some idiotic reason I want to cry again. I won't cry! And I won't sit here. (I have climbed to the old graveyard, and seated myself on the slab of a virtuous spouse.) I need all my nerve force. It must sparkle in the changes I've got to put in my book. And I know why I'm nervous, and I know why I want to cry. It's always satisfactory when you can chase an emotion to its lair—— I was taken to the graveyard when I was very little—mammy used to take me with her when she went to put flowers on my great-aunt's grave, the lady whose false teeth fell into mammy's care; and she (mammy) was always so solemn on these occasions—it was before the day of Christian Science—there was death then, and hell, and a devil. I feel quite cheerful since I have analyzed the teary feeling.

April 26th.
Night.

A letter from Dicky forwarded to New York and on here. It lilts like the song of the happy little wren that was singing in the big cedar tree at the garden gate the day I left home.

"Oh, Caroline," Dicky says, "I want to go out under

the stars to-night at home and bury my face in the pansies that always riot in your April garden. With their soft little faces close, close to mine, I want to tell them a secret. I want to tell it to you, too, Caroline. But not yet—not yet."

I go out under the stars, through the quiet streets, and down to the quiet sea. The night is poignantly sweet and beautiful. Dicky, little sister, child of my love, keep your secret. I could not bear to hear it yet—not yet.

April 27th.

A telegram from Bobby. He wants to come to Plymouth. He has something to tell me. It is Bobby's chivalry that makes him feel he should go through the form of asking me for Dicky. I have wired no. There's a little kodak of him that I cut from a magazine and put in my little silver frame. I can reach out my hand and touch it here where I sit, and, vaguely, it comforts me.

I have faced it. I love Bobby. To love—it is to give. Bobby's wife must give. The hands that take into their keeping that precious thing—his genius—what tender, comprehending hands they must be. There'll be times, lots of 'em, when Bobby's wife will have to do all the loving for two. There'll be times when he will thrust her out, and if she sits whimpering

on the doorstep that it's cold out there, heaven help her—how he'll hate her. There'll be times when the work presses, when he's distrait—knows she's there just as he knows the housefurnishings are there, bed near centre of room, bureau against west wall, light above—— If she gets frightened at the wilted leaves and jerks his love for her out of his body to look at the roots too often, then heaven help you, Robert Haralson.

Bobby, Bobby, I'd know at a glance—without a glance. When you opened the door I'd *feel*, Bobby. Sometimes her tired-out man child quivering with his day's toil asks mother love of his wife. She's got to be counsellor, comforter, friend—comrade with whom to forget life's cares. Out of all the world she's got to be the one woman that is his *need*. I am your *need!* If disaster stripped you of all that the world has showered on you, if it reduced you to the hurdy-gurdy man who grinds his organ under your window—Bobby, Bobby, would Dicky *love* the gathering of the pennies?

April 28th.
Morning.

Bobby wires again: "What are you up to, Caroline, that you didn't let me know you were here, that Dicky didn't know; that Elliott wasn't told it was Dicky with me; that you were so naughty in the Square the other night as to laugh at my confusion? Little girl with eyes

like moonflowers, all right for youse. And mums the word."

"Her eyes, full and clear, with their white-encircled, gray irises, are like moonflowers." That's what Bobby says on page 131 about his heroine. And back in one of his first letters to me, "Please turn to page 131 of the book and try to think whose eyes I tried to describe."

April 28th.

Noon.

On the heels of Bobby's telegram I have this letter from him.

To-day, Wednesday.

My Dear Caroline Howard :

Please hurry up and get all the sea air you want, and go up to Boston and let them show you Milk Street and the *Youth's Companion* building (that's all there is there). Oh, I forgot the beautiful men. Look 'em over! I've seen 'em. They all carry a black network bag with a MS. play, and Emerson, and two watercress sandwiches for lunch in it. All right for youse. Do you know I have an idea that you'll meet your fate up there among the *Baked Beans*. I'm told those Apollo "Belvidears" always take to a girl that's both intelligent and good looking. Get that? Well, I won't send you a wedding present—so, there!

But, speaking seriously, we've had rain here all day. It's been cold, too—kind of like late of an evening when you go down barefoot in the ten-acre medder to drive the cow home, and your mind is on whippoorwills and stone bruises and Cherokee roses and hot corn-pone, and the little girl with the white sunbonnet on the ad-

joining farm that you saw picking cherries in the lane, and who you (I don't mean you, I mean me) fondly imagine is going to come over to your farm some day and scold you when the cow doesn't come home, but who really runs away with a patent churn agent and winds up by keeping a shooting gallery in South Bend, Indiana.

Oh, well, what's the *odds ?*

Hope you are feeling *quite well* after your long trip from the soggy south.

Now while you are up "No'th" just turn yo'self a' loose and have a good time. Down in our country the old-time opinion is that *Liberty Jams* everything into a bad shape, but it ain't so. No—the real and genuine liberty sets you *Free;* it doesn't cramp you or lower your ideals *at All.*

A great many wise people have learned that; *you see Them Everywhere in Greater New York.* And I think you would like to bring your cow up here and spend the remainder of your time. You can live nicely on *fifty cents a week;* but a great deal better on *half a billion* dollars.

Since I have discovered what a help printed matter is to me, I simply love to write letters. I know a man who writes 1,900 letters a day to his *Loved One.* But don't you think he is kind of "crowdin' " the mourners?

Please ma'am write to me some more right away; I like to hear from you.

P.S. I've had a great time chopping up the papers and building this letter. You'll excuse my frivolousness, won't you?

Bob.

Bobby, I condone your offense—time spent cutting up the papers, time worth so many cents per word, to

amuse me. Times spent together when apart, how close they come.

April 29th.

Morning.

How the sea flashes, and the blue, blue sky flashes, too. There's a boat drifting this way. It looks like a white-winged gull afloat, a messenger of joy. How the waves sing, and their swelling song is all about a little girl in a white sunbonnet picking cherries in the lane. I remember that day, too, Bobby. It was a picnic. You climbed the tree and I caught up my dress to catch the big ripe cherries. When the picnic was over and we got home my gentle mother scolded over the ruined dress. She gave it to the washerwoman's little girl.

How the waves sing, and their shouting song is—Bobby's *loved one.*

Afternoon.

The day's mood has changed. A cold wind blows in from the sea. If mammy could see me out here on this deserted stretch of shore in the rain and the spray that dashes on me from the stormy, inrushing waves she'd say her prayers in thankfulness that she put the old storm coat and rubbers in, for I've got them on.

How fierce the rush of the waves! Something as elementally savage as their assault of the shore stirs in me, writhes in its travail—is born. Bobby is *mine.*

Dicky, light-hearted, laughing child who would pluck

the flower of love as a baby gathers a posy, forgive me.

When the day is hot and the road is long, and the flower of love droops, what then, Dicky?

Night.

I have wired Bobby that I will be in New York Wednesday. It will take me that long to finish the changes in the book. I wired him that my train gets in about five-thirty, and that if he likes I will take dinner with him.

April 30th.

Bobby's wire reads:

Sure, Mike, I'll be on hand at 5:30 Wednesday to welcome you on your retreat from Bosting. And don't bother yourself about the train getting in at six or later, for I'll be on the job and I'll be there when you get there.

I have already ordered the lye hominy and turnip greens for dinner, and you'll be properly looked after by the committee of one when you hit the town.

Hoping these few lines will find you the same, I remain,

Yours continuously, B.

May 1st.

Bobby wasn't at the train. If he was, we missed each other. I wasn't conscious of it on the train, but now I know I pictured him there at the station, standing just a little in advance of the mass of people; vaguely, I think my mind ran the gamut of earth's meetings and thought of dim shores, not of earth, where

that one who goes first must surely await the other. To the whir of the wheels as they ate up the miles that lie between Boston and New York my heart sang, Bobby's loved one, Bobby's *loved one.* I was in a maze of vague, happy thought—and he wasn't there—he didn't meet me.

It is 12 P. M. now. I went with Miss Jackson to a horrid little show, and when we came in I could not believe there was not a message of some sort for me.

May 2d.

I stayed in all morning in such a tense state of expectancy that it has left me limp. How glad I am that Dicky does not know I am here—I simply can't see Dicky yet. I am at sea as to Bobby's reason for not meeting me, at sea that no message from him comes to me, but one thing I know: I can trust his, "Mum's the word, Caroline."

Mrs. Christopher and I shopped this afternoon. Afterward we had tea at the Astor and went down to the Waldorf and sat in Peacock Alley. Such a mix up of fine clothes and commonness. The women have hard faces, painted, world-weary, they are too much of —oh, everything: too red as to lips, too black as to eyebrows, too gold as to hair; they don't walk—they can't, poor things—their general appearance as they mince along the Avenue is that of a procession of man-

nikins done up in slit bolster cases. Bah! It all makes me think of a big rock near Marsville. Once I passed it with a mountaineer. "When I wuz a child," he said, "that wuz a monster rock—the masterest (biggest) rock I ever seed. Hit's dwindled sence I wuz a child." Since I reached here New York's dwindled.

"Caroline Howard," I said to myself, sternly, out in the street again, "it isn't New York that has dwindled —it is you. Robert Haralson didn't meet you. Whatever his reason for a dime he could have 'phoned from his home; a slot machine would have cost him a nickel, a note a two-cent stamp."

My shoulders braced, my chin went up, my spirit caught the spirit of this great wonder-town. Night fell. The magic of night on Broadway—the flashing signs, the whizzing motors, the hurrying, surging throngs, the snatches of speech that drift to one's ears, there on the street where all seems youth, laughter, joy—human documents, the snatches of speech one hears. "How can I leave you here?" I heard the words spoken by a plain anxious-faced woman, and the overdressed, under-dressed, doll-faced girl's answer: "You poor dear! How you worry! What have I to fear? New York's lovely, and my job's lovely, and my boss is loveliest of all."

I heard a man's voice, such a cultured, hearty sort of a voice, but a note of bitterness and discouragement

rang through it. "That man—I gave him his chance—brought him here. Look where he is now, and look where I am. He is not an artist. His success is not based on a solid foundation. But look at him—money—fame—what's the use of holding to one's ideals, of being faithful to them. What's the use of—anything?"

My train goes out in an hour. City of laughter and of tears, of power that can crush as a giant foot crushes an ant, marvel of the world—I bid you adieu.

May 4th.
Sunday Night.

I've broken the Sabbath by travelling all day. In town I hired a buggy to bring me home. Our hacks do not run on Sunday. It is raining. It has rained all the way. I had a silent driver who never spoke to me, seldom to his horses. I was glad that it was raining; glad that my driver was silent. My thoughts were as vague, as blurred as the dim mountain forms seen through the rain. We drove through Marsville without meeting a soul. As we passed the Duckett houses that forever watch each other like antagonists, I saw that poor old lady slipping home from doing up his work; I saw him rocking on his front porch in placid content. A sudden rage against this man-made world seized me.

I scrambled in my bag for the little gift to her, leaped out, and sent the man on home with my baggage.

He greeted me jauntily. He was just sitting there counting his blessings. He could eat three as hearty meals a day as he had ever et, and when night come sleep sound as a mouse in a shuck pen—the Lord had been good to the old man.

I wasn't hypocrite enough to take the hand extended. I wanted to shake the life out of his smiling old body.

"Has he been good to the old lady?" I asked. He only stared at me. "Do you know you told me you swam your horse through swollen streams once to get to a little log church because you knew your congregation would be waiting for you there? You wanted to preach that sermon that day that some soul might be saved that you might never reach again. You said you didn't want the devil to get anybody. Do you remember?"

"Yes," he quavered, "I remember."

"Well," I stormed, "it's my honest belief that he will get you. I wonder what the God you have preached all these years means to do with men like you who are mean to their wives and cloak their meanness to poor feeble old women under smooth-sounding texts."

He stood up, his faded blue eyes flashed, his pallid lips under the straggly white moustache worked. When he dropped back in his chair, having uttered no word, I

thought maybe I had killed him. But I did not care. He would have gone to his Maker with a little preparation he would otherwise not have had. I stood over him silent, inexorable.

"She got mad because——"

"Never mind what she got mad about," I said. "For fifty-nine years and six months she didn't get mad. And she's not mad now. I saw her slipping out of the back of your house just a minute ago. She's been doing up your night work. You ought to go over there and get down on your knees—the knees you have worn out praying the Lord to make you the sort of a man you have not desired to be—and ask her to forgive you, and bring her home."

Some good honest blood left in the old veins crept up and tinged the pallid, sunken cheeks. And, suddenly, all my fierceness was gone. I was pleading for the love that had betrayed them at the end of a lifetime. I had his old, old hands in mine that looked so young and strong by contrast, and I was leading him back to their courtship days, to the time when their one little child was born and she almost lost her life. Some of the story I knew from him, and some of it I knew from her. Before I finished the tears were dropping down his cheeks. "The old man has some lonely hours," he said. Gayly I told him they were over; gayly I pressed my gift into his hand, and I fairly pushed him into her gate.

As I hurried on I suddenly realized that the rain was over, that the eastern hills were sparkling under a giant rainbow, and that Ellinor Baxter was rushing toward me with outstretched hands. Ellinor threw as many of her pupils as she could on her assistant, and, with the help of one of the older girls, took my pupils in my absence.

"How radiant you look!" I said as I kissed her. "I was afraid you would be all dragged out with the children."

"The children," she said, vaguely, and then flushing like a rosy girl she plunged into stories of the children's good behaviour. She turned and walked homeward with me. Was it that fleeting brightness in the sky that made her seem so young and bright and strangely changed?

May 15th.

School closed to-day. Commencement was quite a triumph. Monday morning I went to work in the schoolroom, examinations and commencement exercises on hand. Suddenly the play I had seen with Miss Jackson and thought so bad came into my mind. The more I thought of it the better it seemed. I decided on tableaux, my ideas got from that play. There were just fourteen days in which to work it out, but the children hailed it with joy. It was something new; it was something different. Ellinor's help was invalu-

able. Marsville was delighted with it. Ellinor *is* changed. If there was anybody here to love I'd think she was in love. She was running to angles, and now she's got some pretty curves, the gray hairs are quite hidden by the new way she is doing her lovely, heavy, red-brown hair, and her soft brown eyes—they are looking out on the spring world with a new, wistful expression in them. She smiles so easily and she hums snatches of tender old songs.

May 22d.
Midnight.

This afternoon there was an unfamiliar knock at the door and I ran down without waiting for mammy. It was Mr. Elliott. He looked so foreign to the old place, so New Yorkish standing there, that quite without warning, in the way I do things, while my lips were speaking a welcome and he was following me into the sitting-room, something within me was singing: "How could I know I should love thee afar, when I did not love thee anear?" But that something within me was not singing about Mr. Elliott, although I saw the glad light in his eyes. My own eyes saw the sun-shot green May-mist of the trees in Madison Square, the clock's big face above the treetops, against the sky's soft blue the radiant, triumphant Diana. My ears heard the roll of wheels on the Avenue, the clang of cars

on Broadway; my veins felt the beat of the city's hurrying, feverish life.

Out under the pines where mammy brought tea and helped me, with the dignity of a departed day, I still felt alien to it all. Mr. Elliott praised the beaten biscuit, and she told him as a mark of special favour the story of receiving my great aunt's teeth when she was dying. I could not seem to belong to the scene—the big waving pine plumes against the spring sky, the ancient house drowsing in peace, the soft sweep of the hills, the mountains against the sky like a string of sapphires. But when Mr. Elliott said good-bye, when he caught my hands and poured out a flood of eager words, "Would I? Could I?" I came back to reality.

Did it mean *that*, this feel of the city? Could I go back and live there with Mr. Elliott—dear, charming, nice Mr. Elliott. For one swift instant I was swept by his belief in what we together might make of life, and it seemed so infinitely more than I could make of life alone. For one swift instant that old terror—the inevitableness of human change—pierced me like a sword. Always I have felt a contemptuous sort of pity for Jane Joyner, who lives near, toothless and untidy and incapable as she is, with the house running over with dirty children. Was Jane to be pitied? Jane whose youth and beauty were not dead but had passed into another form of life—lived in her children.

Was she out of harmony with life's great laws? Big and fierce my heart cried out, "No!" It was I who was outside of life, not Jane. Her man's arm went round her shoulders nights when she stood over the kitchen stove. Her baby lifted its dirty, loving, laughing little face to hers as it clutched her knees. Taking my lonely after-supper walk I had seen them through the open kitchen door. What had I? A dream that was bodiless, life emptied of the big, vital things. And if I sent Mr. Elliott away as I sent the others, the boy lovers who came over the mountains to tell me what he is telling me now? What have I left that is more than I refuse? In the bare, honest moment I faced it. Bleak and stark in its honesty, the truth faced me. After work hours when I walk in the twilight and look in Jane Joyner's kitchen the thing that comes close to my heart is a dream without a body—nothing more.

"I thought I was happy until you came along," Mr. Elliott was saying. "Then I found out how lonely my gayety was."

He is strong and fine, capable of making a woman happy, and I hold the future of our two lives in my hands. And then he was drawing me to him. Almost, his lips touched mine. The quick revolt, the wave of physical nausea—it was as though an icy, sinister wind had swooped down on my blooming flowers and shrivelled them.

With a desolate little smile I drew back from him, an alien standing outside of all that might have been mine. I bade him good-bye, and to-night, when I walked by Jane's kitchen, open to the soft night, I turned my eyes away, afraid to look in on the sweet little home scene. In all my life I have never felt so alone.

Wednesday Morning.

Mr. Elliott sent back a wonderful basket of fruit. It came over on the hack and the whole village is agog over it. The gossip has disturbed dear old mammy greatly. She suggests that we still the gossip and flatter our neighbours by giving a party. Then they won't know what to think. I have consented. Mammy is a woman of action. The party comes off this afternoon. The house hums with activity.

Wednesday Afternoon.

The party has passed into history. I got only the littlest taste of the contents of that beautiful basket Mr. Elliott sent me. Everybody was here, and they all seemed to have such a good time. Even the reconciled Ducketts tottered over. What a success I seem to be at reuniting severed hearts. If my book is a failure I may set up an establishment of the sort—go into a trance and vision dazzling futures for people. Well, how do I like the idea? Seven days ago had I put the

question to myself my spirit would have flung back in bitterness, "Physician, heal thyself."

For seven nights, no matter which way I willed my feet to go, they have led me past Jane's kitchen door. Alone in the soft spring darkness, in the soft wet darkness some of the nights, I have faced my life. I have looked in that open door till the bitterness and the loneliness have gone out of me. Last night when her man's arms went about her as she dished their supper, when her child's arms reached up to her, I looked in, not in bitterness, not in pity of self, not in aching loneliness, but in love. It is wonderful when you can look in on untidy Janes at their kitchen tasks and feel close to their happiness. Life's supremest gift is hers. Almost, it was mine. Not a makeshift, not a compromise—life's supremest gift. Across sunlit waves a boat like a white-winged gull set sail for me. Almost, it reached me. How my heart went out to that white drifting boat of prophecy! How the waves sang! Bobby's *loved one.* Sunlit waves and flashing white-winged boat are gone. But the singing soul of those words shall keep my heart young. It shall be tender to the young and happy, pitiful to the old and alone, compassionate to all untouched by love, whether they scoff in unbelief or whether they would lay down their lives for love.

Oh, how tired I am! And how heavy the silence is

here in the bridelike, white loveliness of my May garden! And how this silence differs from its fall silences! The silence holds resignation in the fall—this is tense with expectancy. The snowballs that have come so late this year are swaying, they seem to be beckoning to some one, but there is no wind. And the lilies of the valley, late, too—my flower children delayed their blooming till I came home—are swaying; they are pouring out their fragrance—it is poignantly, deliciously sweet, but I feel no wind.

Something is the matter with this garden and with me. I am quivering all over as if with intense excitement. The party has tired me out. Just then, when John opened the gate, I almost leaped from this bench.

The letters John has brought me are from Mr. Elliott and Dicky. I open Mr. Elliott's first—a woman always opens a man's letter first. It is a fine, manly letter, and it ends:

"You said you once knew Bob Haralson. He has been at death's door—struck down without a moment's warning—appendicitis—a knife quick or death operation. It was the day you came down from Boston. I remember date because you came down from Boston. Haralson is creeping about. I saw him yesterday."

The lines of mountains dance dizzily. I shut my eyes—shut out the spring glory, my fingers making a pressing blackness against my eyeballs. I try to imag-

ine the world this spring day with Bobby gone out of it. Then my heart leaps madly. It is explained—*explained.*

I can't sit still, so I climb to the hilltop. I am calmer in motion. I can see the village from the hilltop. It is being claimed by the twilight, the soft, slow, lingering spring twilight. There must be a lot of moisture to make such a brilliant aftermath. The heavens are so pink they have tinged the eastern hills. League on league the cloud waves blush pink as the heart of a seashell. The whole world glows. My mood catches the sky's glowing mood. It is explained. He has been ill unto death, but he is not dead—he is alive—*alive.*

Something drops from my belt and I pick it up and stare at it stupidly. It is Dicky's little letter. Dicky will know about Bobby. She will explain their presence together that night at Mouquin's.

"Caroline, is your right hand paralyzed that I don't hear from you? Do a lot of little tow-headed mountaineers and a garden that I know is at its loveliest now mean more to you than I do? I can't understand your silence. I am coming home. I am to have my vacation now, and I am to keep on having it. Somebody's with me. He is the secret of the prolonged vacation. I guess it will be in June. That's the loveliest time of all. He will be here only a day or two, three at the longest, and I hate to think of him at that dinky

little Marsville hotel. Hotel! Ye gods! Come to New York and we will show you some hotels. Dearest, won't you, won't you, have him home with us? There are some such ducks of places to spoon these moonlit nights in that heavenly rose garden of yours."

Did I cry out in that sharp pain, or was it some wounded thing out there in the shadow of the woods? Steadily I finish the letter. It is to-day—now, at twilight—when the hack gets in, that Dicky and her lover are coming. She apologizes that we do not know earlier, but mammy and I are equal to any emergency. I do feel sorry for mammy, but I walk on straight into the sunset glare, leaving mammy to her fate. That is my only sensation—I am sorry for mammy. She does love to splurge when company comes.

Far down the road I see a buggy. It is coming this way. There are two people in it, but it is too far away to recognize faces. It is two men. It stops. One man gets out, the other turns the buggy around and drives back toward the village. The man who got out of the buggy walks on in the rose-red haze that wraps the world. The lilies of the valley that I thrust in my belt send out a sudden fragrance—it is the trembling of my body that has shaken them. I stop because I can't walk on. I lean against a friendly tree-trunk.

The man comes on, moving slowly, feebly, I see as

he gets nearer. I think of trivial things, as we do in crisic moments. Bobby is taller than I thought. The hat he is wearing adds distinction to one who is already distinguè. The crease in his trousers will be copied by the young men of Marsville. From somewhere in me a faint satisfaction stirs that the party has left me wearing my best new gown, my hair done in a New York way.

Almost at my side Bobby stops, panting a little. I speak first. Women always do. I feel sure Eve opened the conversation when Adam waked from the sleep that deprived him of a rib and supplied him with a wife.

"So you have come again—and not alone this time." It is not in the least what I meant to say.

"Did you know that I came?" Bobby's low voice holds a note of surprise. "How did you know? But I suppose the boy told you."

"I was in the garden. I saw you. I know why you came, and why you left."

"Why did I leave?"

"You ran from a youthful ideal."

"Men have done more foolish things," Bobby's answer comes gravely.

"And wiser." I hate the mocking laughter that escapes my lips.

"I don't understand you." His face has grown

whiter; it has changed subtly. "Has Elliott been here? Is it Elliott?"

I sweetly assure him that Mr. Elliott has been here, and I manage to leave the impression that he may be coming again.

This time Bobby's face goes close to black. With a mocking little bow he bids me good-bye, turns, goes down the road. He marches straight ahead. I have never seen a lion stalk through an African jungle, but I think of one as I look at him. Where is he going? Where is Dicky's lover going? A dumb sort of fright grips me. I spin down the road to where he marches breast forward with never a backward look—if a woman can spin in these narrow-not-made-to-overtake-anybody's-lover New York frocks.

"Bobby," I cry, hard upon him, "stop!"

He turns. Not the Bobby of my letters, not the Bobby of my dreams, not the Bobby of Washington Square, a politely impatient-to-be-gone stranger.

Always, it is the unexpected that overtakes me. To my amazed surprise I wet with salty tears my New York finery.

"I'm tired, Bobby," I gasp. "I've been having a party—and I'm not used to having parties. That's what makes me such a cat. And, oh, Bobby, you'll have to pardon things—Dicky just sprung your coming on us."

"Dicky didn't know that I was coming." He speaks slowly, he takes my face in his hands and looks down at me, a long, deep look. The hard, black look on his own face has lifted.

As I try to tell him that Dicky didn't tell me he was ill, that I have just learned it from Mr. Elliott's letter, as I try to tell him what the bright May world would be to Dicky with him gone out of it, and as I flounder that I hope they will be heavenly happy, I splash more tears on my pretty clothes.

Bobby's face flashes—all that a woman could want or dream of comes into it.

"Dicky didn't know I was in the hospital. I went in under an assumed name. When a fellow's tied up with publishers and theatrical people like I am——" Bobby drops the subject as one that holds no further interest. "If I had died, would it have spoiled the May world for you, Caroline?" There is a sharp note of anxiety in his voice.

"Bobby, Bobby!" I cry, wildly. "Don't ask me! What have you done with Dicky! Where is Dicky?"

"I am not Dicky's keeper." The light glows and glows in his face. "She's got one, though, and it was odd we should all three have left town together. I smoked like a furnace all the way down as an excuse to keep away from them. Caroline"—Bobby's arms close about me—"I am not Dicky's—I am yours."

Walking home in the twilight that is gray and tender as a dove's breast, Bobby tells me that he *was* afraid the night he ran away. He says he has tried and tried not to love me—that men like him should never marry —that they should live alone on the top of the Flat Iron. "But it is bigger than I," he says, gravely. "It has swept me to your feet."

"To my heart," I correct, happily.

The hack lumbers around the curve, descends upon us. At sight of us Dicky and the strange young man who sits on the back seat w th her—John and Ellinor are on the middle seat—roar with laughter.

"You sly fox!" Dicky cries. "How did you get here? We left him on the train, Caroline, and he sent his regards to you—and he said he was on his way to Colorado."

"I am," Bobby boldly declares. "I stopped by to see if Caroline would go with me. As to my getting here first, I live in New York. As rapid transit as is obtainable, say I."

Dicky flings herself into my arms. "You owe it all to me," she declares. "I found him deadly tiresome." She beamed on Bobby. "All his talk was about you.

"You sly fox," she whirled on him again. "You didn't need to have me tell you about Caroline. You were hearing from her all the time, now, weren't you? Why didn't you tell me, Caroline?"

"I—I—I——" I stammered.

Bobby isn't timid, he's bold as a lion. "The reason is obvious," he declares. "I wouldn't let her. Had you known that I heard, too, it would have changed everything."

The others descend from the hack. It goes on with Dicky's baggage. I realize that John has been an unnecessarily long time helping Ellinor out of the carriage; but there are no surprises left in the world. I greet Dicky's lover. As we take our leisurely way home I don't even wonder what mammy will have for supper.

May 30th.

"Day's at the morn
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled"——

I am just back from taking a look at old Camel Back. The morning's like an opal—it's all a shifting mist shot through with sunshine. None of the mountains have shaken off their last night's mist-blankets but that brave old blessed Camel Back. He knew I'd be up, and he gave me royal greeting. "Well," he seemed to say, "haven't I poured all the treasures of the earth perfumed with all the scents of Araby into your outstretched hands?"

I meant to tell Bobby about Camel Back—for so long I have told my fancies to a pictured Bobby—but when I thought of it last night, just before he left for the "dinky" little hotel with Dicky's doctor—he was busy fitting a piece of cardboard in which he had cut a round hole on a certain finger of my left hand, and, anyway, it is not easy to tell fancies to an eager man who is murmuring realities in one's ears—like this: "Dearest one, will you hurry, oh, hurry, and get the gingham, and the barred muslin, and the bias bombazine fixed up, and let's get married quick."

The morning's at seven. At eight all of us, Bobby and Dicky's doctor, Ellinor, too, are going to breakfast in my rose garden. Mammy planned it last night. She came to the sitting-room door and asked them all with the manner of a duchess.

I go to the kitchen door—broiled chickens and waffles, strawberries and cream. "Can I help you, mammy?"

"Mammy don't need no help. This come while you was gallivantin' up the lane." The big, bold, square envelope sets my heart to leaping:

DEAREST:

I looked into my thought reservoir last night after I left you and discovered that if I hadn't ever met you before I would have loved you just the same. Is that disloyalty to Carrie with the gold braids and the capricious moods? No, by my halidome, no! I have

two in my heart—two girls—one the ideal of romantic youth, the other, the completer, sweeter, better beloved Caroline, but no less an ideal. Am I not the richest man in the world? If this be bigamy, give me bigamy or give me death.

P.S. I didn't answer that question last night. Why did the cabby swear at you? Cabbies always swear unless you tip them. But never mind, hereafter I'll be on hand to do the tipping for you.

P.P.S. I want you, my honey.

P.P.P.S. I need you.

THE END

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